THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

# ForteanTimes

PRESENTS

THE INCREDIBLE CYCLING FROG

THE SENSATIONAL SASQUATCH

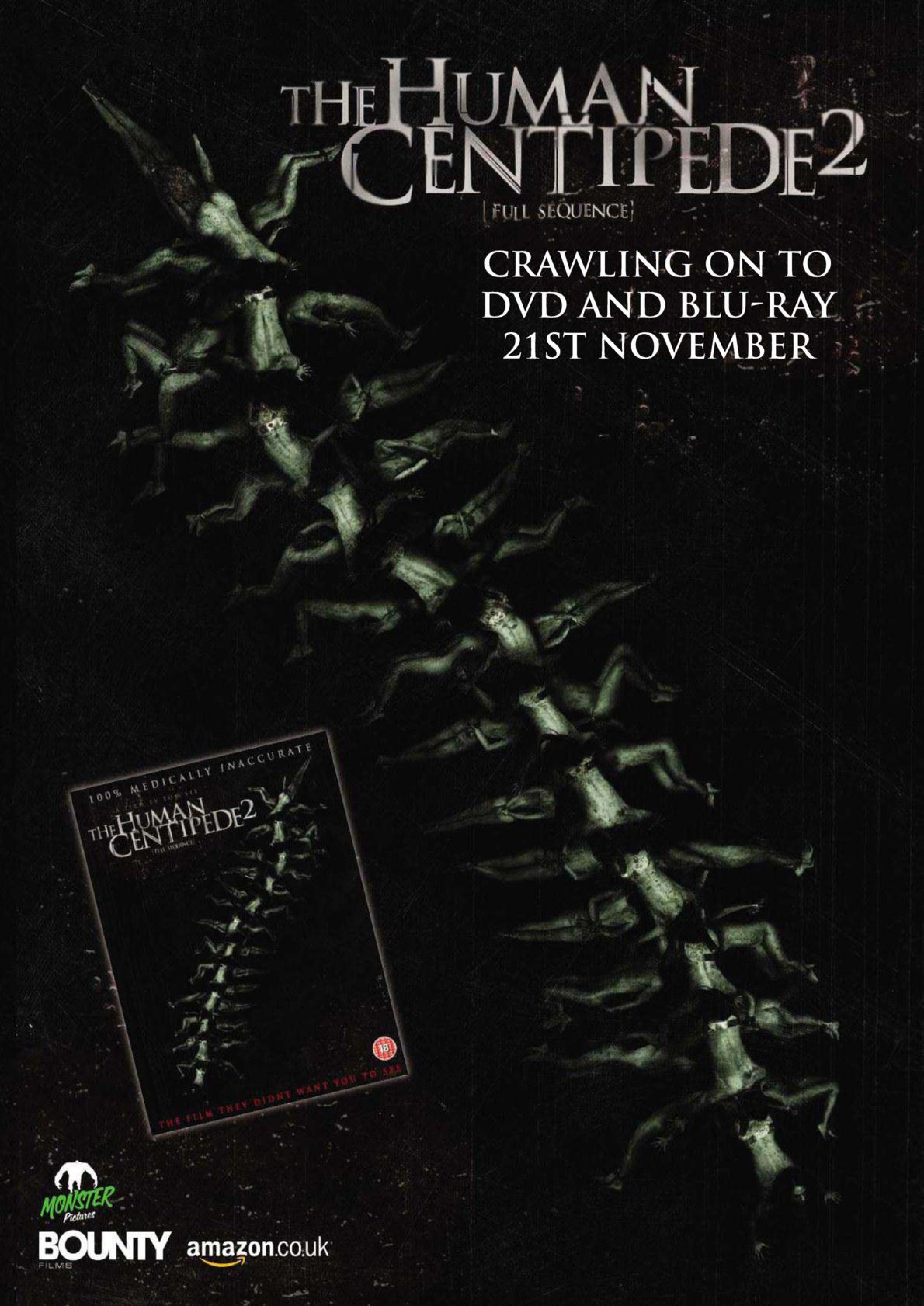
DON WANTS CAKE

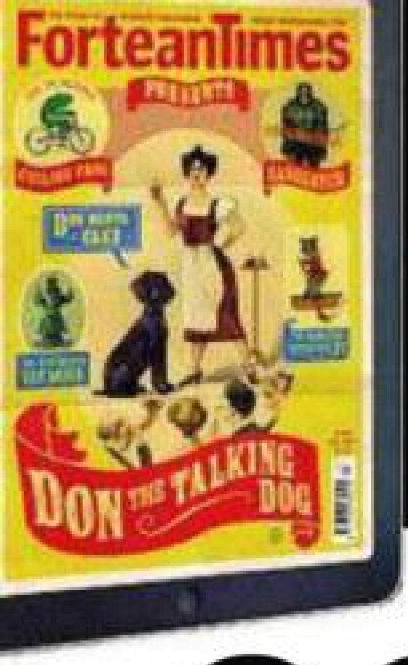
THE MYSTERIOUS SEA MONK

THE AMAZING TRAVELLING CAT

## DON THE TALKING DOG

FT282
DEC 2011
£4.25


THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE 2
[FULL SEQUENCE]
CRAWLING ON TO
DVD AND BLU-RAY
21ST NOVEMBER
100% MEDICALLY INACCURATE
A FILM BY TOM SIX
THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE 2
[FULL SEQUENCE]
18
THE FILM THEY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO SEE
MONSTER Pictures
BOUNTY FILMS
amazon.co.uk

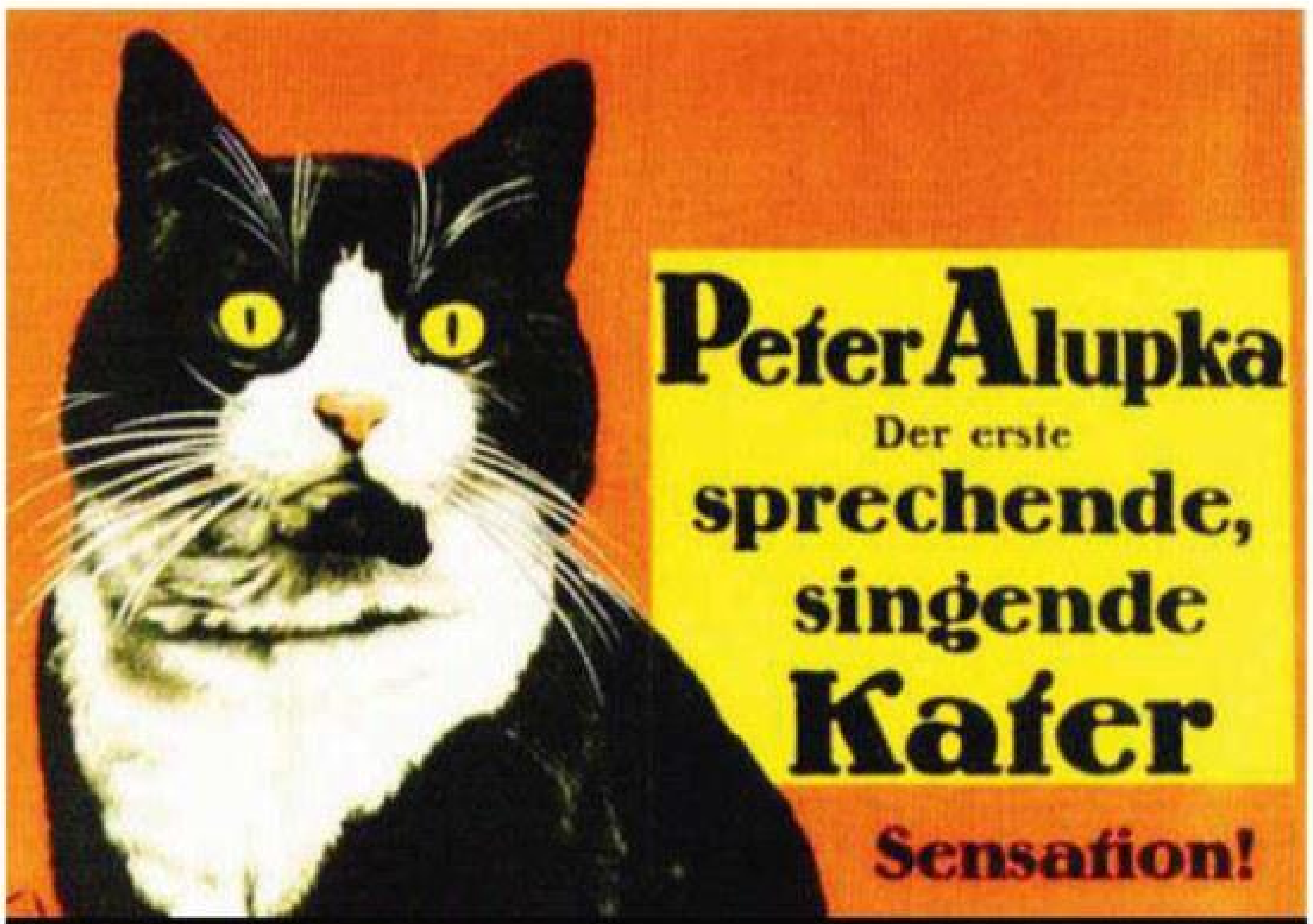


FORTEAN TIMES THE DIGITAL EDITION!
NOW AVAILABLE ON iPAD, iPHONE, PC AND MAC
VISIT WWW.ZINIO.COM TO ORDER YOUR COPY OR SUBSCRIBE

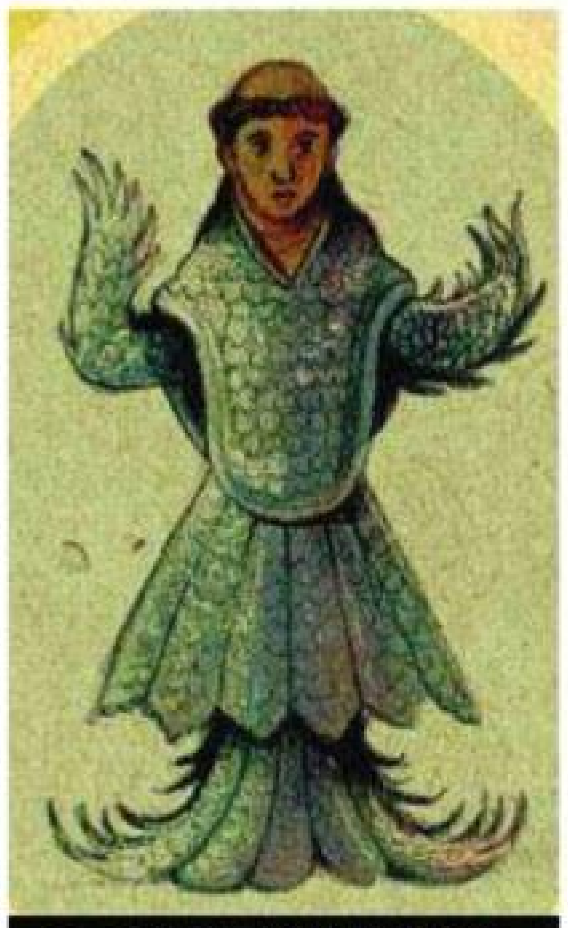
# Fortean Times 282

# CONTENTS

## the world of strange phenomena



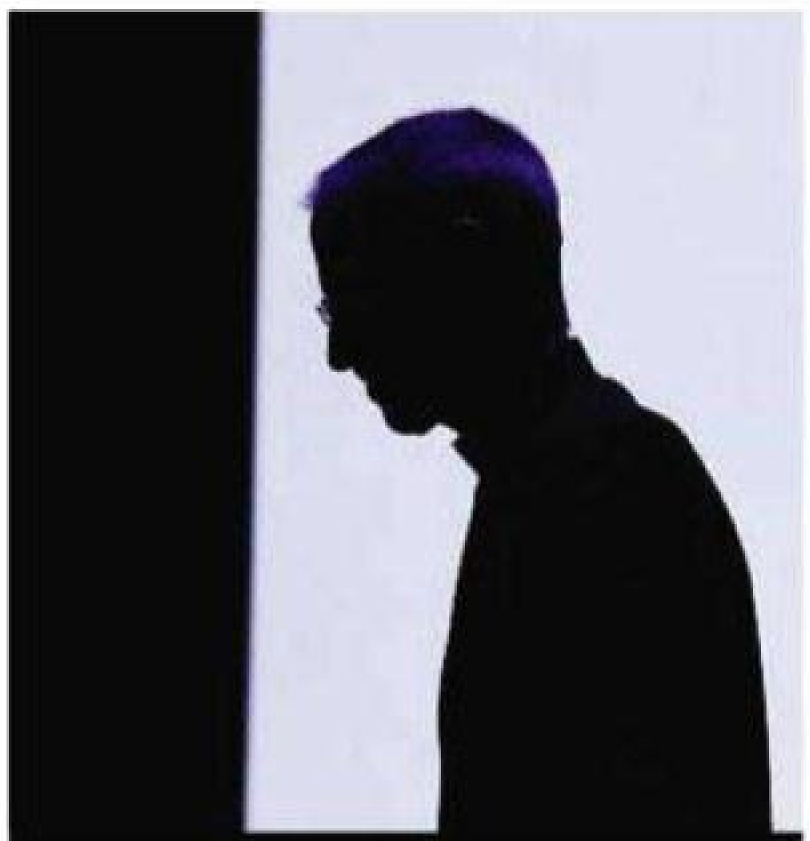
**32 TALKING DOGS AND CHATTY CATS**
The amazing career of Don the Talking Dog and other extraordinary animals


JONATHAN BURTON

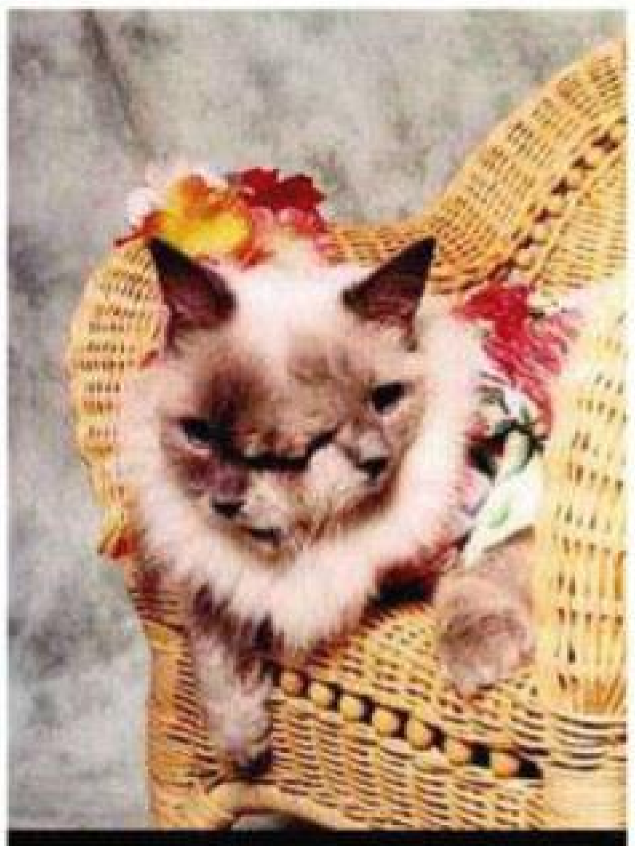
**48 SOMETHING IN THE WATER**
Sea monks and other oddities

GEORGE BINNING

**38 WEIRD WEEKEND**
Creatures on the loose in deepest Devon


GETTY IMAGES / JUSTIN SULLIVAN

**58 GOODBYE, STEVE JOBS**
Was the Apple founder really a secular saint?


MARTY STEVENS

**21 LOOKING BOTH WAYS**
The oldest ever Janus cat

COVER IMAGE: JONATHAN BURTON

## strange days

High-speed ageing; ASSAP goes legit; 9/11 predictions; Siberian Bigfoot hunt; sleep disorders; Nessie photo; man hears his own eyeballs; memory loss; latest Ig Nobel awards; feline journeys – and much more.

14 SCIENCE
16 GHOSTWATCH
17 MYTHCONCEPTIONS
18 ARCHÆOLOGY
19 CLASSICAL CORNER
21 ALIEN ZOO
25 KONSPIRACY KORNER
26 NECROLOG
27 STRANGE DEATHS

## features

**COVER STORY**

### 32 DON THE TALKING DOG

Ever feel your pets "understand every word you say"? What if they could not only answer back but tell you just what was on their minds? **DR JAN BONDESON** reveals the remarkable story of some extraordinary animals that toured Europe and America.

### 40 BATRACHIAN VELOCIPEDISTS

**ROBERT DAMON SCHNECK** considers two cases of frogs on bicycles and ponders the links between these odd amphibians and the paranormal.

### 42 PAWS FOR THOUGHT

**MERRILY HARPUR** surveys the recent Alien Big Cat (ABC) scene. Encounters with these mysterious out-of-place felids have become more common and more credible, with wildlife experts and TV celebs believing big cats are present in Britain – but the cats themselves remain elusive.

### 48 DENMARK'S WEIRD WATERS

**LARS THOMAS** describes some of the lesser-known denizens of Denmark's seas, lakes and waterways, from the killer pike of Copenhagen to the spooky guardian of Alling Creek...

## reports

**30 BLASTS FROM THE PAST**
No. 34. When Sasquatch was young by Ulrich Magin

**38 FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**
No. 114. Weird Weekend 2011 by George Binning

**52 FORTEAN TIMES DICTIONARY OF THE DAMNED**
No. 42. Earth mysteries, Part 2

## forum

**57** Don't shrink the kids! by Mikita Brottman
**58** My own portable Jesus by SD Tucker

## regulars

02 EDITORIAL
56 SUBSCRIPTIONS
61 REVIEWS
73 LETTERS
78 READER INFO
79 PHENOMENOMIX
80 TALES FROM THE VAULT

**EDITOR**
DAVID SUTTON (david_sutton@dennis.co.uk)
TEL: 020 7907 6235 FAX: 020 7907 6139
**FOUNDING EDITORS**
BOB RICKARD (rickard@forteantimes.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteantimes.com)
**ART DIRECTOR**
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
(etienne_gilfillan@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6236
**SUB EDITOR**
OWEN WHITEOAK
(owen_whiteoak@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6237
**WEB EDITOR/PICTURE RESEARCHER**
NICK ČIRKOVIČ
(nick_cirkovic@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6238
**BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR**
VAL STEVENSON
(val_stevenson@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6239
**RESIDENT CARTOONIST**
HUNT EMERSON

**SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES**
www.subsinfo.co.uk
ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

You can manage your existing subscription through http://www.subsinfo.co.uk/ – this should be your first port of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

Change your address, renew your subscription
or report problems
UK subscriptions: 0844 844 0049
USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 888-428-6676
Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com
Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)1795 592 909
Fax: +44 (0)1795 414 555

**LICENSING & SYNDICATION**
*FORTEAN TIMES* IS AVAILABLE FOR
INTERNATIONAL LICENSING – CONTACT
HANNAH HEAGNEY: 020 7907 6134
hannah_heagney@dennis.co.uk
*FORTEAN TIMES* IS AVAILABLE FOR
INTERNATIONAL SYNDICATION – CONTACT
ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI: 020 7907 6132
anj_dosaj-halai@dennis.co.uk
**YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET**
www.forteantimes.com

Dennis

**PUBLISHED BY**
DENNIS PUBLISHING,
30 Cleveland Street
London W1T 4JD, UK Tel: 020 7907 6000
**PUBLISHER**
RUSSELL BLACKMAN: 020 7907 6488
russell_blackman@dennis.co.uk
**CIRCULATION MANAGER**
james.mangan@seymour.co.uk
**EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER**
gareth.viggers@seymour.co.uk
**SENIOR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE**
EBONY BESAGNI: 020 7907 6060
ebony_besagni@dennis.co.uk

**GROUP SALES DIRECTOR**
DAN REEVES
020 7907 6752
dan_reeves@dennis.co.uk
**SENIOR ADVERTISING SALES**
CIARAN SCARRY
020 7907 6683
ciaran_scarry@dennis.co.uk

**PRINTED** BY BENHAM GOODHEAD PRINT LTD

**DISTRIBUTION**
**Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide**
by Seymour Distribution Ltd.
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk
**Speciality store distribution** by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 7881272

**STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES**
12 issues: UK £39.98; EU £47.50;
REST OF THE WORLD £55; US $79.99 ($143.98 for 24 issues)

**Fortean Times** (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom. The 2008 US annual subscription price is $79.99.
Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434.
Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.
**US Postmaster:** Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

**DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED**

| | |
|---|---|
| GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR | IAN LEGGETT |
| FINANCE DIRECTOR | BRETT REYNOLDS |
| EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | KERIN O'CONNOR |
| CHIEF EXECUTIVE | JAMES TYE |
| CHAIRMAN | FELIX DENNIS |

ABC Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
© Fortean Times: NOVEMBER 2011

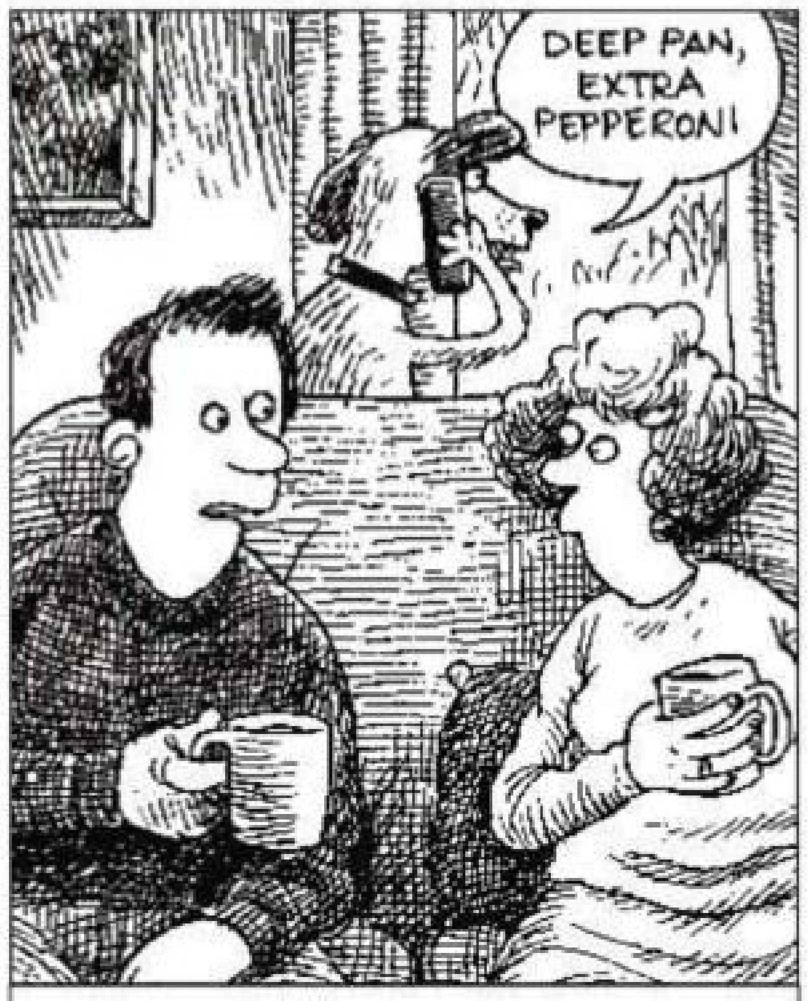
# editorial

## Saints and monsters

In this issue, we celebrate animal oddities – from Don the Talking Dog, whose extraordinary career is detailed by Jan Bondeson in our lead feature, to the weird denizens of Denmark's waterways described by Lars Thomas (not to mention travelling cats, cycling frogs and the early exploits of young Sasquatch).

We also bid farewell to two major fortean figures, whose very different contributions to ufology Jenny Randles explored last issue (**FT281:31**): Hilary Evans, a gentleman scholar who helped transform the study of UFO, and other, encounters, as well as co-founding the great Mary Evans Picture Library; and Budd Hopkins, a talented artist who ended up championing the cause of supposed alien 'abductees' (see Necrolog, pp26–28)

A much higher profile departure was that of Apple founder and CEO Steve Jobs, whose death was greeted by extraordinary scenes of mourning. It was widely acknowledged that the geeks were having their Diana moment, as around the world Apple Stores (those tastefully austere churches of consumerism) became sites of tribute and mourning and public figures fell over themselves to make wildly inflated claims for a man who, after all, gave us products that Charlie Brooker, in his *Guardian* column, once described as "glorified Fisher-Price activity centres for adults" (and that was before the iPad). So, just because a vastly wealthy and ruthlessly competitive businessman sometimes wore no shoes, listened to the Beatles and dropped the occasional Zen-like *bon mot* into his sales presentations, does he qualify as a latter-day saint or contemporary guru? SD Tucker has his doubts (see pp58–59), but Jobs's status as a modern-day Messiah for our consumer culture and the remarkable reaction to his death perhaps tell us some uncomfortable truths about where we – at least in the developed world – are.



"Everyone says: 'A talking dog! That must be brilliant!'"

MARTIN ROSS

### Remembering John Michell

A number of ventures are under way to commemorate and continue the work of the late John Michell. One is the newly-founded John Michell Club, established by many of his friends and followers. "The idea is that for a modest annual fee you will receive regular issues of the eight-page, full-colour John Michell Circular (geddit?) and invitations to meet convivial co-conspirators at an eclectic John Michell Supper. These evenings will be mostly held at the Devereux Arms, off Fleet Street, and include a set meal, guest speakers, book stall and good company making merry".

Interested? You can subscribe to the Circular by sending £12.50 (payable to Boggis) to Kingsdown House, West Street, Somerset, TA11 6NA or by supplying your email details to johnmichellclub@hotmail.co.uk and paying via PayPal, after which you'll be sent the latest circular and details about attending the next supper. You can also do this by visiting the new website at http://johnmichellclub.com.

Another initiative, of a more concrete (excuse the pun) nature, is the John Michell Memorial Sculpture, recently unveiled at All Saints Church, Notting Hill, near to which John lived for over 40 years. Sculptor John de Pauley took his inspiration from mysterious Neolithic stone spheres to create a one-tonne "Platonic solid" made of granite and sitting on a slab of Portland stone bearing an inscription. The sculpture has now been placed in a newly landscaped courtyard behind the church, but there is still a shortfall in raising the £8,000 cost of the project. If you would like to contribute towards this lasting memorial to John, please contact *FT*'s old friend Richard Adams at richard@adamsassociates.demon.co.uk.

### Get Your Flying Snakes Here...

Would those wishing to purchase the new fortean magazine *Flying Snake* [**FT280:65**; www.flyingsnakepress.co.uk] please make out cheques to the editor, Richard Muirhead, rather than to *Flying Snake*.

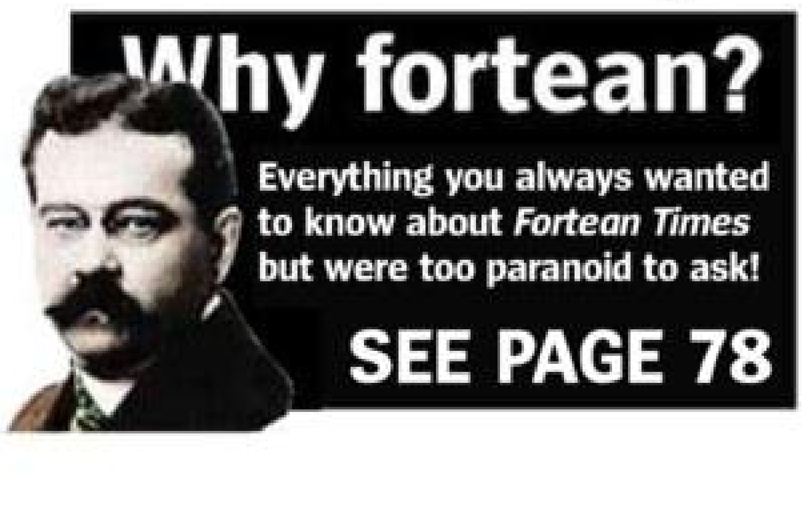
### Erratum

**FT279:** 8–9 Due to an editorial error, the picture credit for the lower cloud image ("Phenomenal sunset") was omitted. This should have read: EPA / Attila Robert Horvath. Our apologies to EPA and Mr Horvath.

DAVID SUTTON

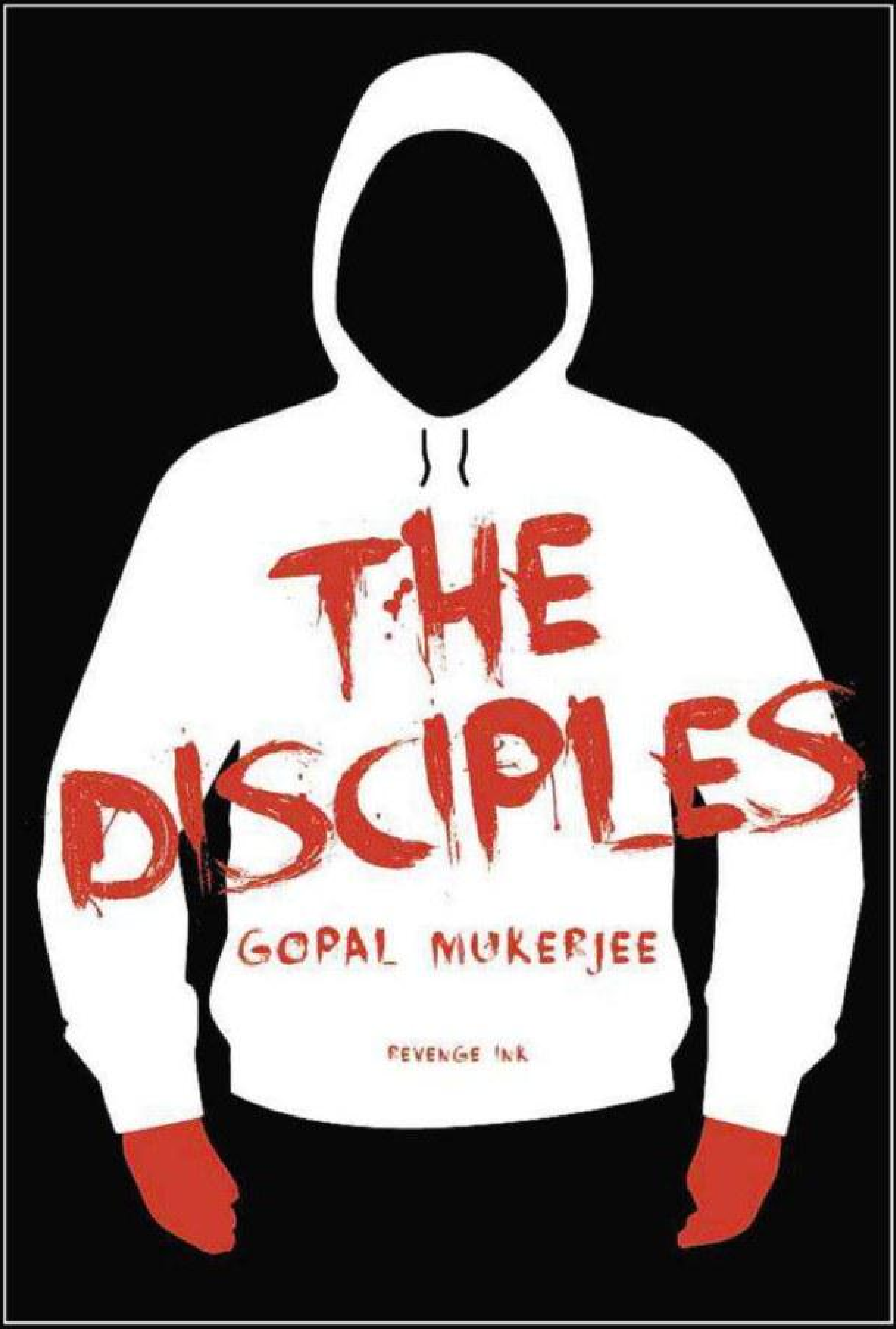
BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
PAUL SIEVEKING


Why fortean?
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
SEE PAGE 78

# REVENGE INK

THIS HALLOWEEN, HANG OUT WITH *THESE* DUDES.



## THE DISCIPLES: A NOVEL FOR THE APOCALYPSE,

**GOPAL MUKERJEE**
**(CO-FOUNDER REVENGE INK)**

*ISBN 978-0-9565119-5-9*
*Price: £7.99*

REVENGE INK HALLOWEEN FEATURE.
The time: the near future. The place: America, a fractured and nightmarish cityscape.
A quartet of demented and violent psychopaths embark on a nocturnal ‘Bull Run,’ a savage and surreal road trip undertaken at the behest of their ‘Meister,’ Buford Aloysius Howell, also known as the *Lord Baron of Pain*. Over one single night, the trip spirals downward into a morass of bizarre pit stops, necrophilia, cultish torture and ritualized slaughter.
This is a ‘novel for the apocalypse,’ a narrative that mingles dark humour and violence in a prolonged *danse macabre*. Read it if you dare.

*“You figure right. That’s how Benny went out. Ultimate sacrifice for the Meister.”*
*John blinks. “Benny?”*
*“Yeah. Benny Santeria, a Bull Run sachem and enforcer from the old days. Went out flaming in a neo-Fauvist death orgy last Friday night. Way up on a floodlit helipad, Sacher Masoch Tower Nine. His kowtows and pussy drones slit open his belly with a Southern Baptist sacrificial knife, garroted him with his own guts, set him ablaze with a blue sapphire torch and slung him out into the night with a jerrybuilt trebuchet. Howled his rawhide ballsack off right through but it’s how he wanted to go, his tribute to the Meister, got to come up with something better when it’s my turn.”*
*John stare. Blink. “Heard THAT.”*

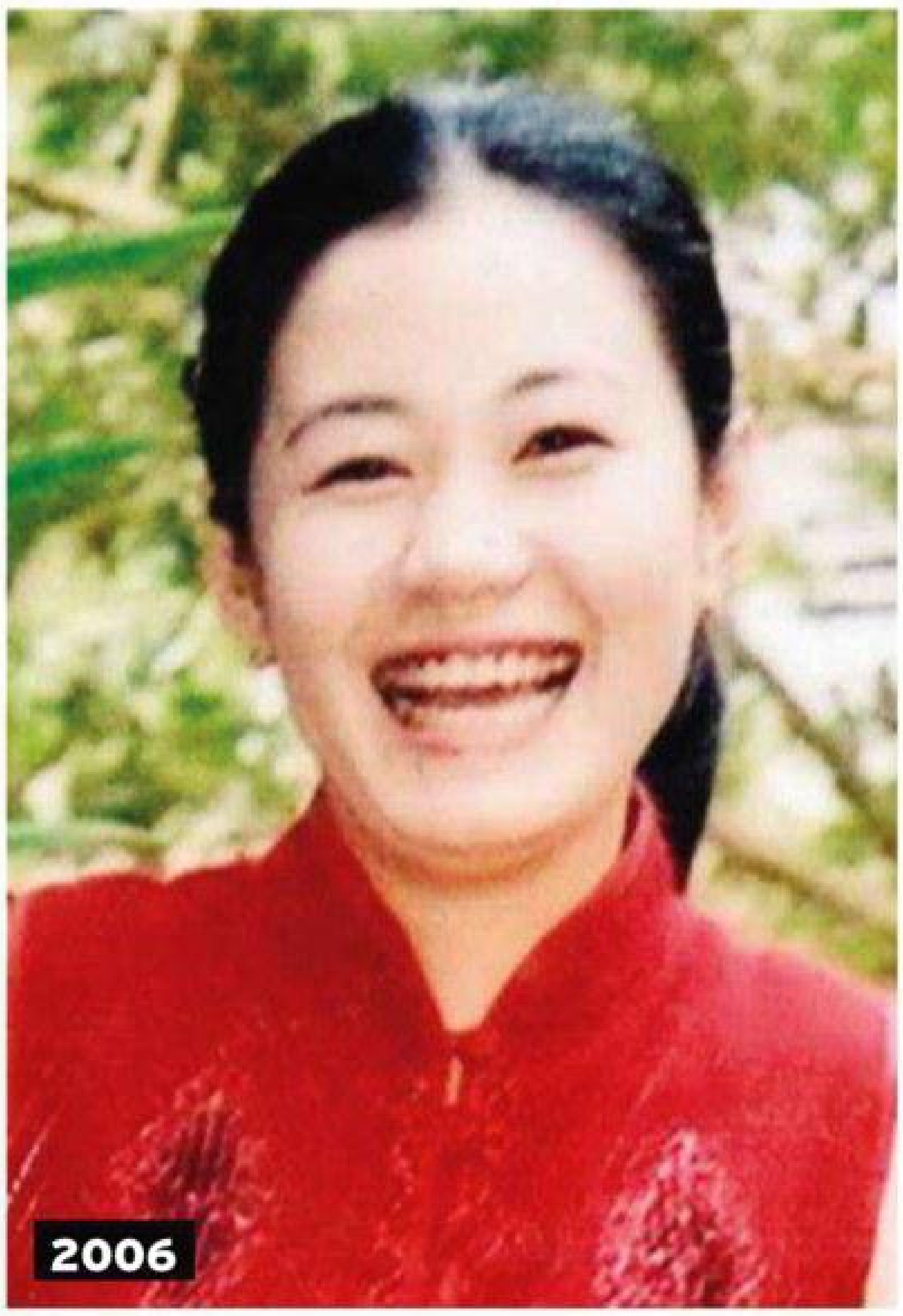
**REVENGE INK**
**REVENGEINK.COM**
When genius is dead, everyman counts...

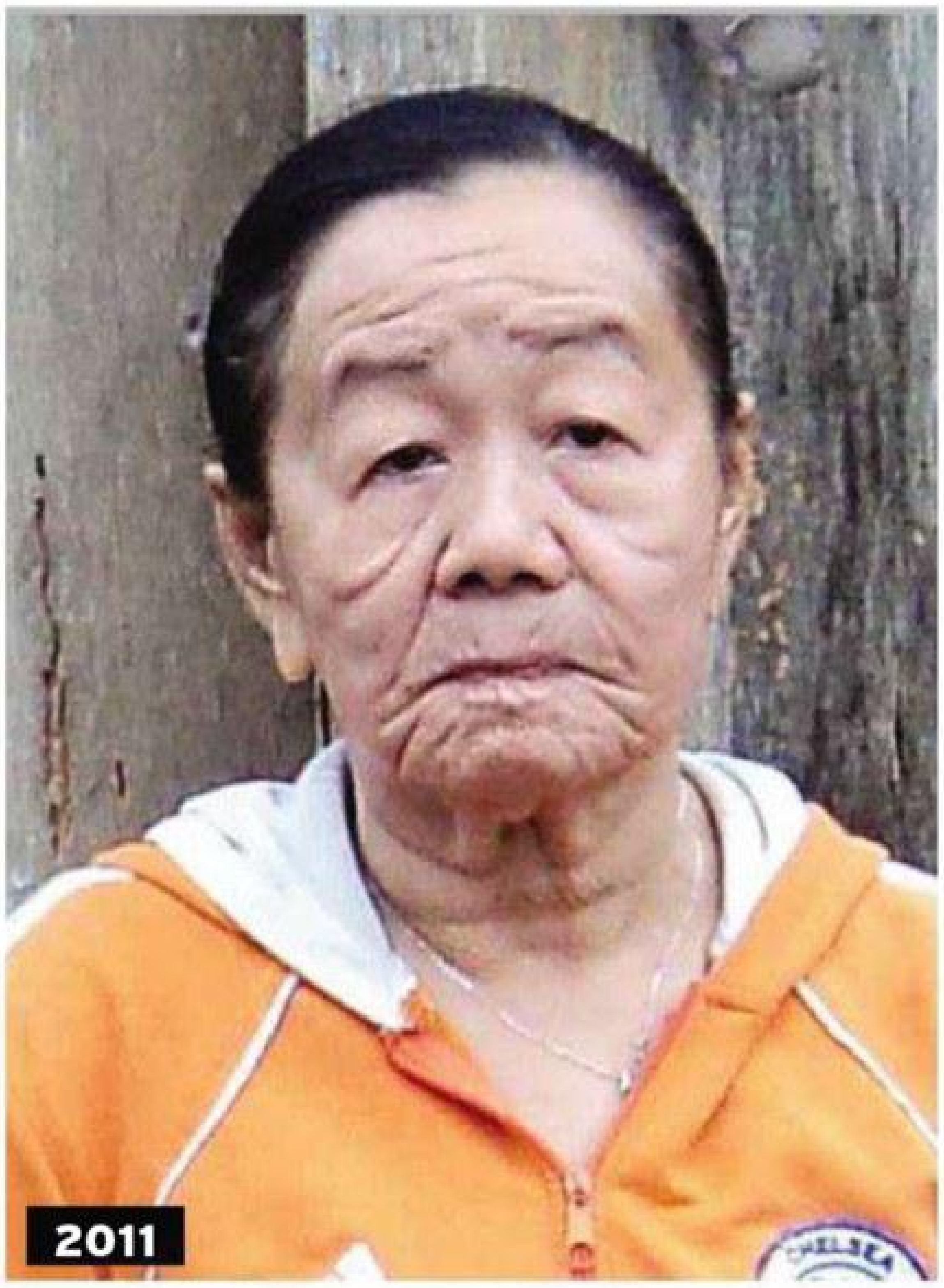
A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

# strangedays

## The fast-track to old age

### Allergic reaction to seafood causes woman in her twenties apparently to age 50 years in just five


2006


2011

BOTH PIX: HOTSPOT MEDIA PICTURES

The women in these photographs may look like granddaughter and grandmother, but they are in fact the same person, with only five years separating the pictures. On the left is Nguyen Thi Phuong aged 21 at her wedding in 2006, and on the right as she looks today, aged 26. An allergic reaction to seafood in 2008 visibly aged the Vietnamese woman in a matter of days, leaving her with sagging, wrinkled skin all over her face and body.

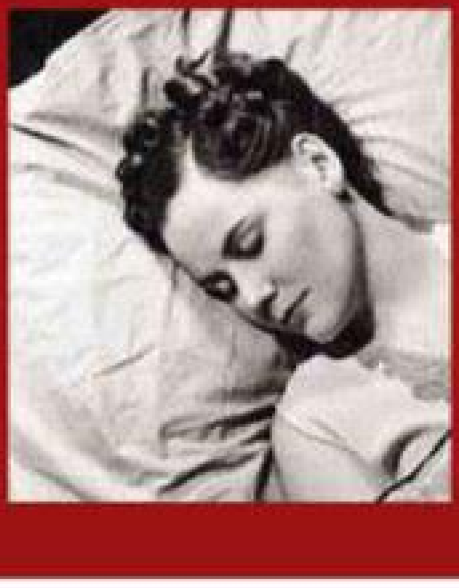
Some doctors argue that she is suffering from lipodystrophy, an extremely rare and incurable syndrome that causes a layer of fatty tissue beneath the surface of the skin to disintegrate while the skin itself continues to grow at a startling pace. Victims number around 2,000 worldwide. Other doctors disagree with the lipodystrophy diagnosis, suggesting instead that she is suffering the side effects of too much steroid medication.

Phuong explained she has long been allergic to seafood and suffered a particularly bad reaction in 2008. “I was really itchy all over my body,” she said. “I had to scratch even while sleeping.” She took some medicine bought at a local pharmacy instead of going to the hospital because she and her husband Nguyen Thanh Tuyen, now 33, were too poor to afford proper medical care. “After one month of taking the drugs, I became less itchy but hives remained on my skin. Then I switched to traditional medicine and all the hives disappeared, together with my itching. However, my skin began to sag and fold.” She then took another kind of traditional medicine to treat her rapid-aging skin problem – but to no avail. The couple do not remember what the medicine was or which pharmacy they got it from. The couple, from the Mekong Delta province of Ben Tre, agreed to talk to the media for the first time in order to ask for help. Tuyen said his love for his once beautiful wife has not faded.

“We considered that it was our destiny and I quit treatment in 2009,” said Phuong. “Now I always wear a face mask whenever I go out. The skin on my face, chest and belly have folds like an old woman who has given birth several times although I have never had a child. But the rapid-aging syndrome hasn’t affected my menstrual cycle, hair, teeth, eyes and mind.”

**Her skin sags all over like an old woman’s**

In 2010, the couple migrated to the southern province of Binh Phuoc’s Bu Dop District where they rent a small wooden house. Tuyen continues to work as a carpenter while Phuong got a job at a cashew-nut processing factory. Both earn a total of less than £92 a month, which means they couldn’t afford an examination at a major hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. However, on 2 October, doctors from Nguyen Dinh Chieu Hospital in Ben Tre Province said they would examine Phuong for free and send her to the HCMC Dermatology Hospital if they failed to diagnose her condition. *telegraph.co.uk, Metro, 14 Oct 2011.*



**FORTY WINKS**
Not so sweet dreams for these troubled sleepers
**PAGE 10**

**IG NOBEL AWARDS**
Bottle-loving beetles and the tortoises' yawning habits
**PAGE 22**

**AMAZING CAT NAV**
More epic journeys taken by our furry feline friends
**PAGE 24**

# ASSAP recognised

## UK government recognises paranormal professionals

PAUL JAMES PEARSON

In surprising news, the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP) has announced that it has been registered with the UK government as a Professional Body for Investigators of Anomalous Phenomena. The announcement was made at ASSAP's 30th anniversary conference, 'Seriously Strange', which was held at the University of Bath in September 2011.

ASSAP Chairman Dave Wood (shown at right) commented: "This is big news for paranormal investigators and a serious game-changer. Whilst the government has not changed policy or provided regulation, it has recognised investigation of anomalous phenomena as being capable of being a professional activity. And it recognised that what ASSAP has always done is to provide the kind of services that a professional body does."

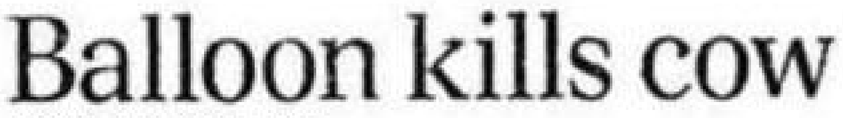
Paranormal investigations have always been seen as 'unofficial activity', and there are thousands of unrecognised amateur investigators in the UK today. This contrasts with psychical researchers and parapsychologists, who have long had representation in the Society for Psychical Research and the Parapsychological Association.

Dave added: "All investigators can take pride in this recognition, and a lot of people have asked what happens next. We are consulting on what this all means and are encouraging people to come forward with views. This is voluntary, people do not have to become part of a professional body, but the opportunities this presents for investigators is huge. We are keen for as many people as possible to be a part of this."

ASSAP is a registered education and research charity founded in 1981 by some of the leading paranormal researchers of the time, such as *Fortean Times* founding editor Bob Rickard, Royal Photographic Society President Vernon Harrison, Hilary Evans, Hugh Pincott and Jenny Randles. The organisation has often featured at *FT*'s UnConvention. ASSAP's Honorary President is the Rev. Lionel Fanthorpe, who succeeded the late TV star, writer and founder member of the Goons, Michael Bentine.

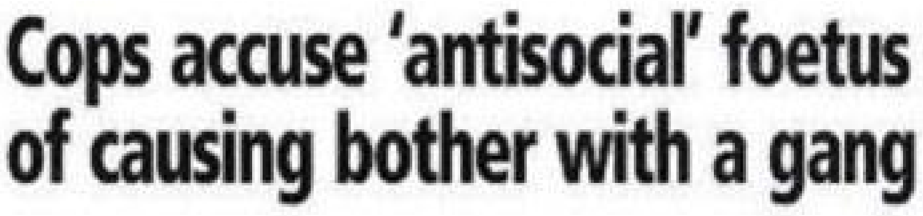
For more information about ASSAP, visit the website at www.assap.ac.uk and for information on the consultation visit www.assap.ac.uk/consultation.

## EXTRA! EXTRA! FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



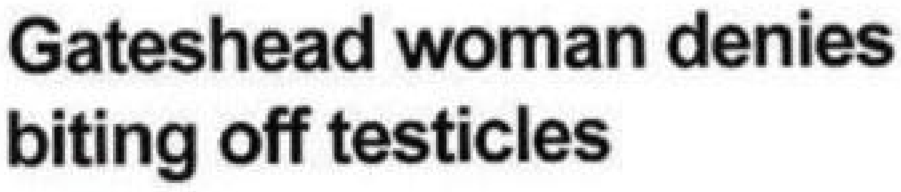
Balloon kills cow

*D.Telegraph, 6 May 2011.*



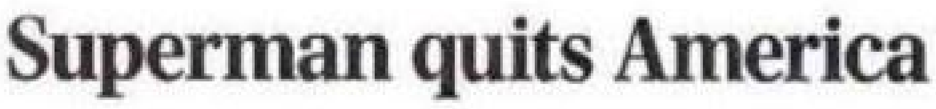
Cops accuse 'antisocial' foetus of causing bother with a gang

*Lincoln Target, 21 April 2011.*



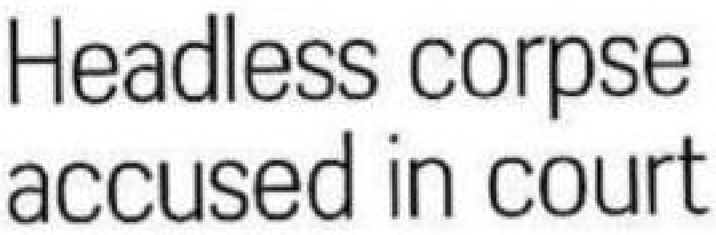
Gateshead woman denies biting off testicles

*BBC News, 21 April 2011.*



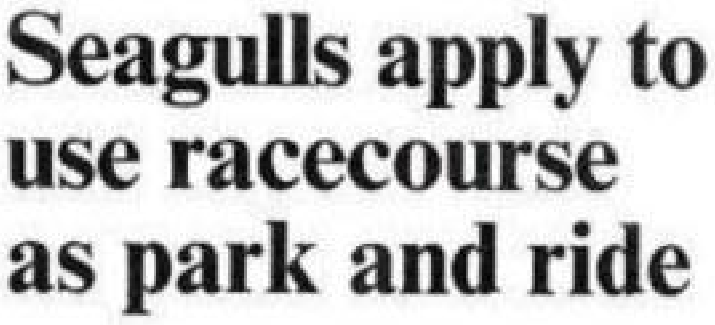
Superman quits America

*D.Telegraph, 30 April 2011.*



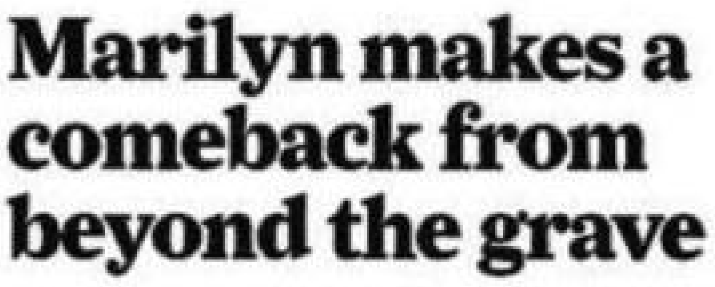
Headless corpse accused in court

*Bedfordshire on Sunday, ~May 2011.*



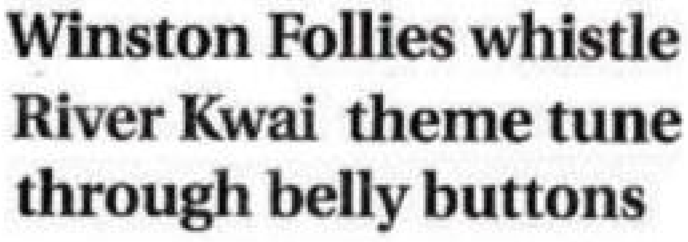
Seagulls apply to use racecourse as park and ride

*Brighton Argus, 26 April 2011.*



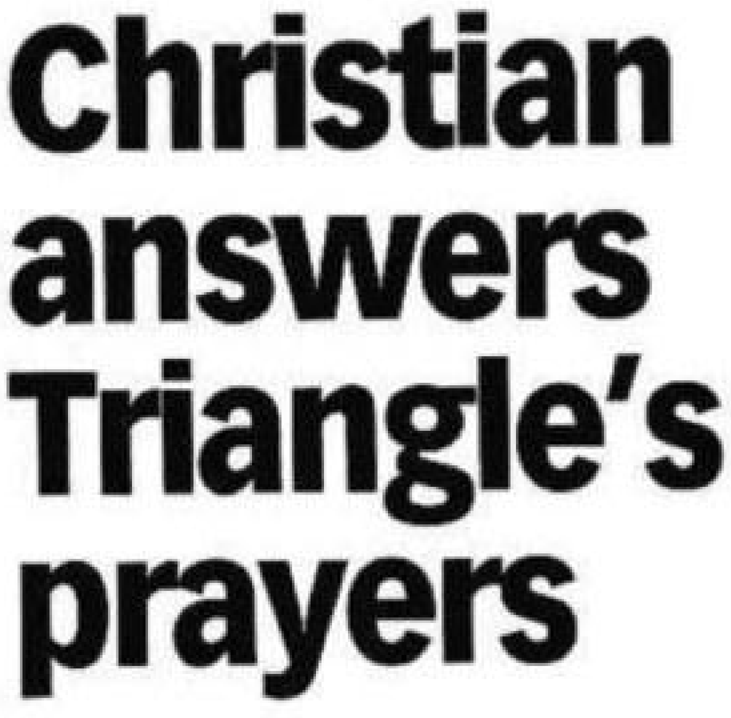
Marilyn makes a comeback from beyond the grave

*Independent, 14 Jan 2011.*



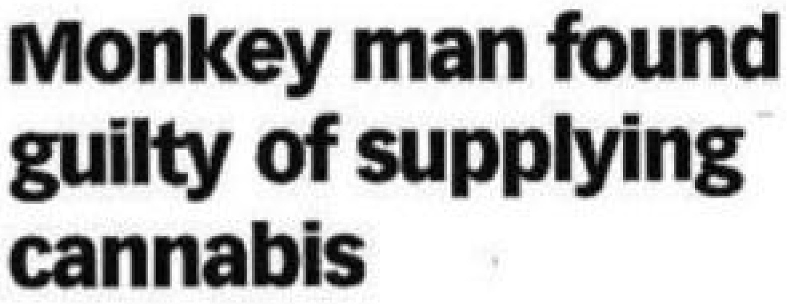
Winston Follies whistle River Kwai theme tune through belly buttons

*Teeside Mercury, 20 April 2011.*



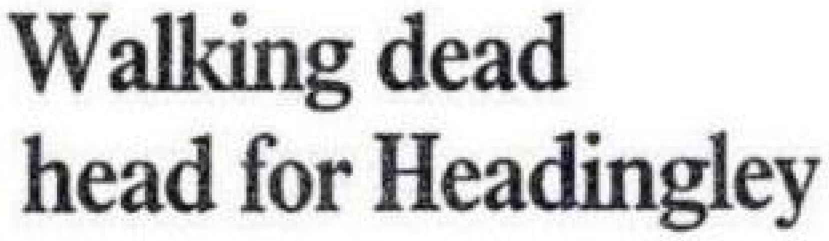
Christian answers Triangle's prayers

*Halifax Eve. Courier, 2 May 2011.*



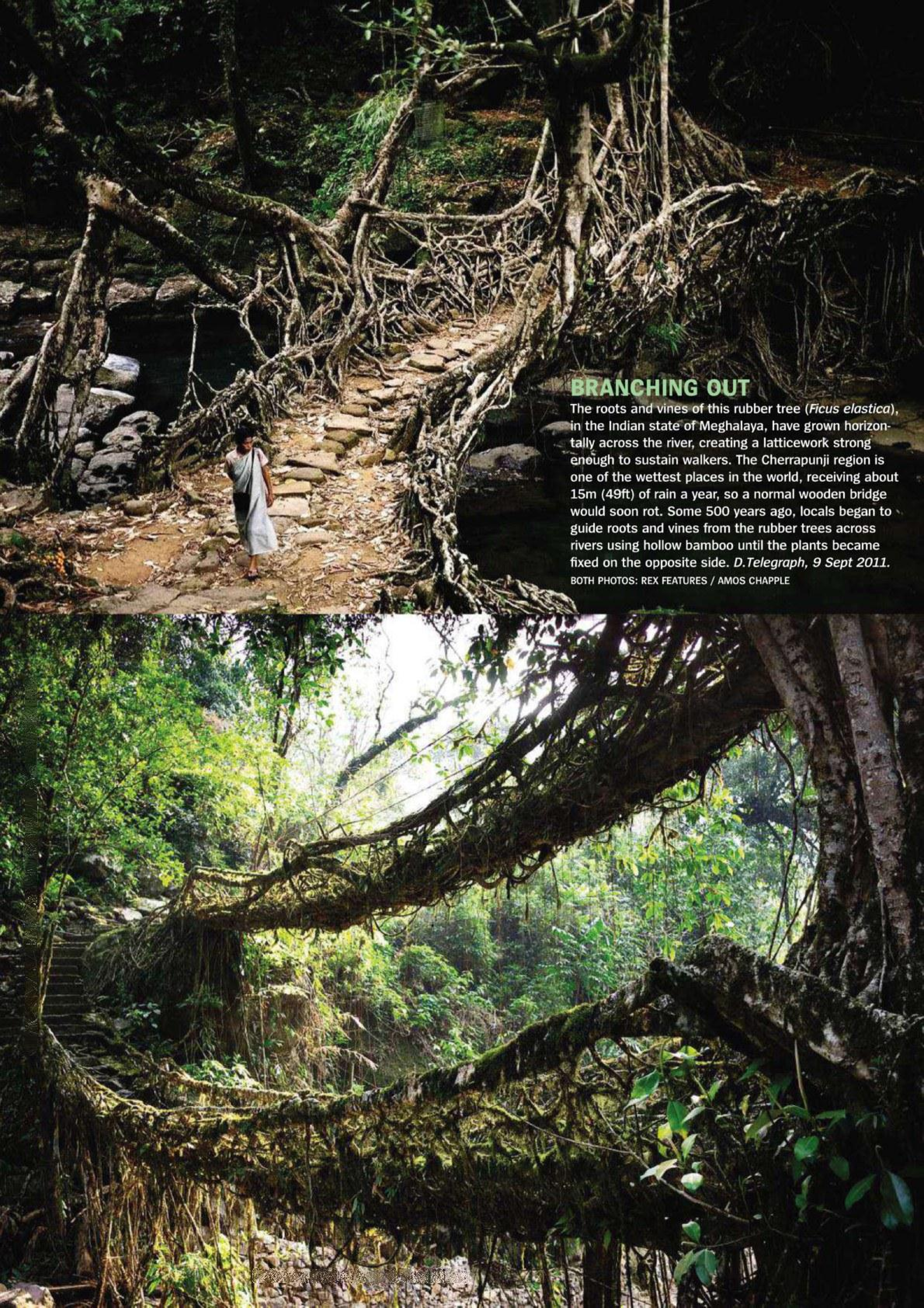
Monkey man found guilty of supplying cannabis

*Halifax Eve. Courier, 1 Feb 2011.*



Walking dead head for Headingley

*Yorkshire Eve. Post, 20 April 2011.*



## BRANCHING OUT

The roots and vines of this rubber tree (*Ficus elastica*), in the Indian state of Meghalaya, have grown horizontally across the river, creating a latticework strong enough to sustain walkers. The Cherrapunji region is one of the wettest places in the world, receiving about 15m (49ft) of rain a year, so a normal wooden bridge would soon rot. Some 500 years ago, locals began to guide roots and vines from the rubber trees across rivers using hollow bamboo until the plants became fixed on the opposite side. *D.Telegraph, 9 Sept 2011.*

BOTH PHOTOS: REX FEATURES / AMOS CHAPPLE

DinoPC.com
0844 999 4123

## Select your BEAST!

**Gallant AMD 560**

AMD Phenom II X2 560 Black Edition
Gigabyte M68MT-S2P Motherboard
Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit
4GB DDR3 RAM
NVIDIA GeForce GTX 550 Ti 1GB
500GB S-ATAIII HDD
Xigmatek Case + Xigmatek PSU

**£395**
inc. VAT

**Alioramus 2500K OC @ 4.5Ghz**

Intel Core i5 2500K @ 4.5Ghz
Gigabyte Z68AP-D3 Motherboard
Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit
4GB DDR3 RAM
ATI Radeon HD 6870 1GB
60GB S-ATAIII SSD + 500GB S-ATAIII
Zalman Z9 Case + Xigmatek PSU

**£675**
inc. VAT

**Evolution 2600K OC @ 5Ghz**

Intel Core i7 2600K @ 5Ghz
Gigabyte Z68X-UD5 Motherboard
Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit
16GB DDR3 Corsair 1600Mhz RAM
NVIDIA GeForce GTX 590 3GB
60GB S-ATAIII SSD + 1TB Caviar Black
Corsair 600T + Corsair 850W HX

**£1,799**
inc. VAT

Watercooled!

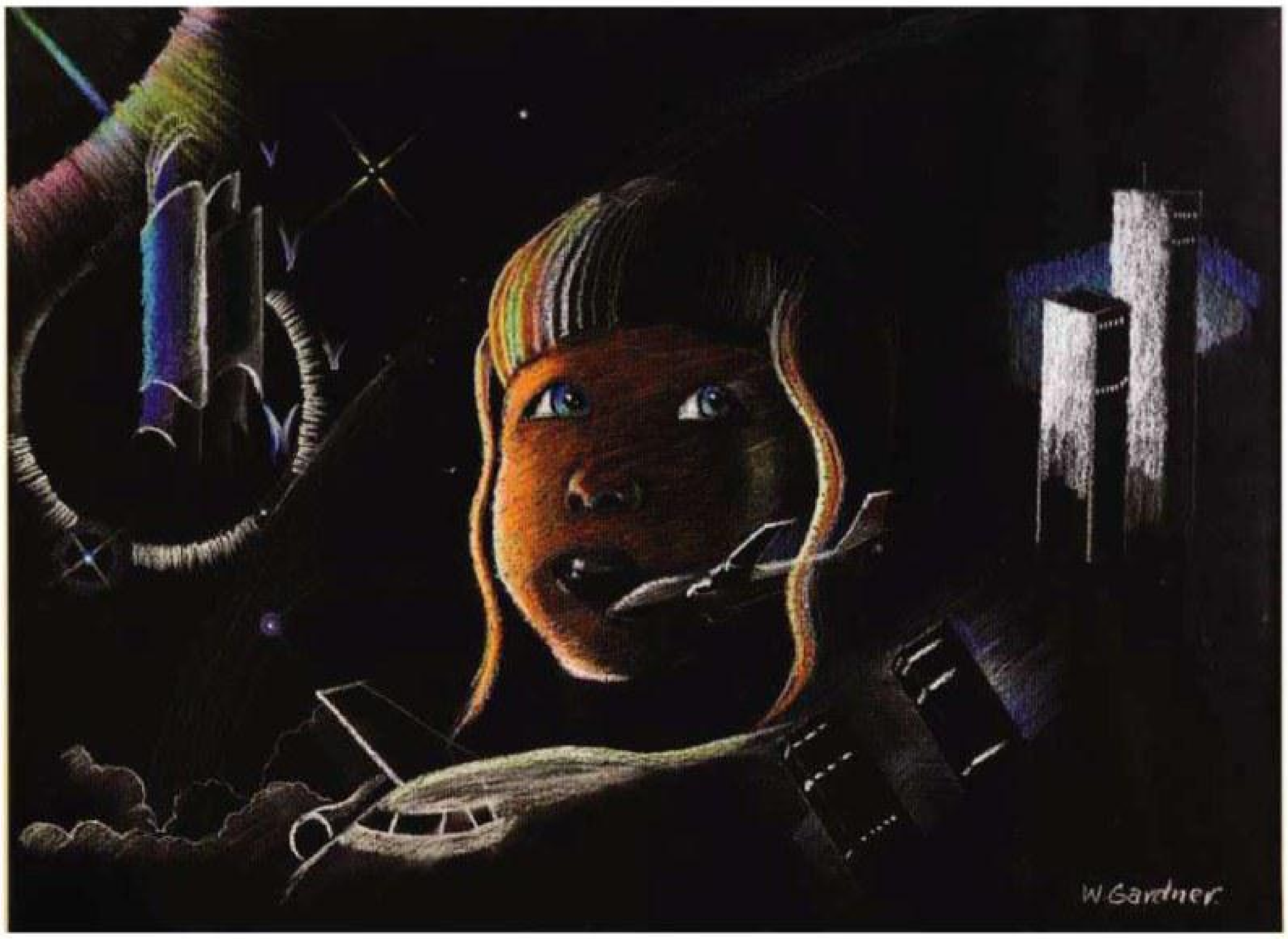
BATMAN
ARKHAM CITY

**FREE Batman Arkham City Game**
**Use Discount Code DSCFRTN**

Powered By
GIGABYTE™
Leader in Motherboard Innovation

# Anticipating 9/11

## Drawing foretold the WTC attacks, plus a premonition



CENTRAL SCOTLAND NEWS AGENCY

A chalk drawing from the 1980s bears eerie similarities to the terrorist attack in New York on 11 September 2001. A worried girl looks skywards; there are twin towers and two aircraft, with the girl's hair resembling flames from one of the buildings. The more distant plane sports a distinctive red-tipped tail, echoing the livery of one of the hijacked jets that were crashed into the World Trade Center. The artist, a Scot named Willie Gardner, died in 2010 aged 78, leaving his inspiration for the picture as a mystery. "There was nothing supernatural about him," said his daughter. "He was interested in science fiction, though." Lex Cook, who used to work at Grangemouth Education Unit in Stirlingshire, said: "It was maybe 1988 or 1989 that I first saw [the picture]. The boss at the time liked it and Willie gave it to him for the centre." *Metro, 9 Sept; Sun, 10 Sept 2011.*

- When Andrew Bailey, 29, woke up screaming on 9 September 2001, his fiancée Miosotys Fernandez asked him what was wrong. "He explained he had a dream that someone had knocked on our door and when it was opened the Grim Reaper was standing there," she said. "I just thought he was being crazy and told him to calm down. Andrew, from Solihull in the West Midlands, moved to New York as a teenager and later got work in the North Tower of the World Trade Center as a security boss for insurance brokers Marsh & McLennan. In 1999, he met and fell in love with Miosotys, who worked on the visitor desk. They got engaged in May 2001, and planned to marry on 19 December. He moved into her apartment in Queens, where she lived with her three small daughters. "Andrew always told me he would die before he was 30," she said. "He would have dreams about dying in different ways. I would tell him it wasn't going to happen to him and not to be so negative. But I guess deep down he really did know."

On 11 September, Miosotys recalled, "Andrew had swapped his shift to start at 7am instead of 8am and left before me that morning." As he left, he told her "You are the best thing that has ever happened to me," adding "Call me when you get into work." As one of her daughters was refusing to go to school, Miosotys was delayed and was late for work. As she approached the Twin Towers, the first aircraft hit and she ran to escape falling debris. A few days later, she was asked to find personal items belonging to Andrew which would contain his DNA to facilitate identifying his remains, and was shocked when she opened his cupboard. "All of his things were laid out in there; his wallet, credit cards, and watch – items he normally would have taken with him to work," she said. "It was as if he knew he was leaving me that morning and never coming back." Six months later, she received confirmation that he had in fact perished in the collapsed building. *Sunday Mercury, 11 Sept 2011.*

## SIDELINES...

### SKY SERPENT

Jean Owen, 71, screamed when a live snake fell from the sky as she was hanging out her washing in Bangor, North Wales. She threw a duvet cover over it before running for help. Experts said it was a non-poisonous Bairds Rat Snake, a popular pet. Talon marks showed it probably wriggled free after being grabbed by a bird. *Sun, 19 Aug 2011.*

### COMBAT GNOMES

After serving in Afghanistan, Naval officer Shawn Thorsson, 34, from Pataluma, California, came up with the idea of combat garden gnomes, as he wanted a military presence in his garden. He began selling the gnomes, brandishing an M16A2 assault rifle or an AK-47, on etsy.com for $15 each. *MX News (Sydney), 22 Aug 2011.*

### ONE REGRET

Anders Breivik astonished Norwegian police by repeatedly expressing his sorrow for killing a mouse. The maniac who slaughtered 77 people [**FT281:22–25**] ran over the rodent accidentally as he drove to prepare a fertiliser bomb at a farm near Rena, north of Oslo. "It is the only thing he regrets," said a police spokesman. *Sun, 19 Aug 2011.*

### ARE YOU JOE KING?

When Laurel-Ann Hasen married James Hardie, she became Laurel-Ann Hardie. She is a lecturer on contemporary media at Fanshaw College, Ontario. Author Charlie Connelly quipped: "If we could track down a Keith Stonecops and a Mark Spruthers too, we'd really be on to something." *Metro, 15 June 2011.*

### 'GATORS IN NORFOLK

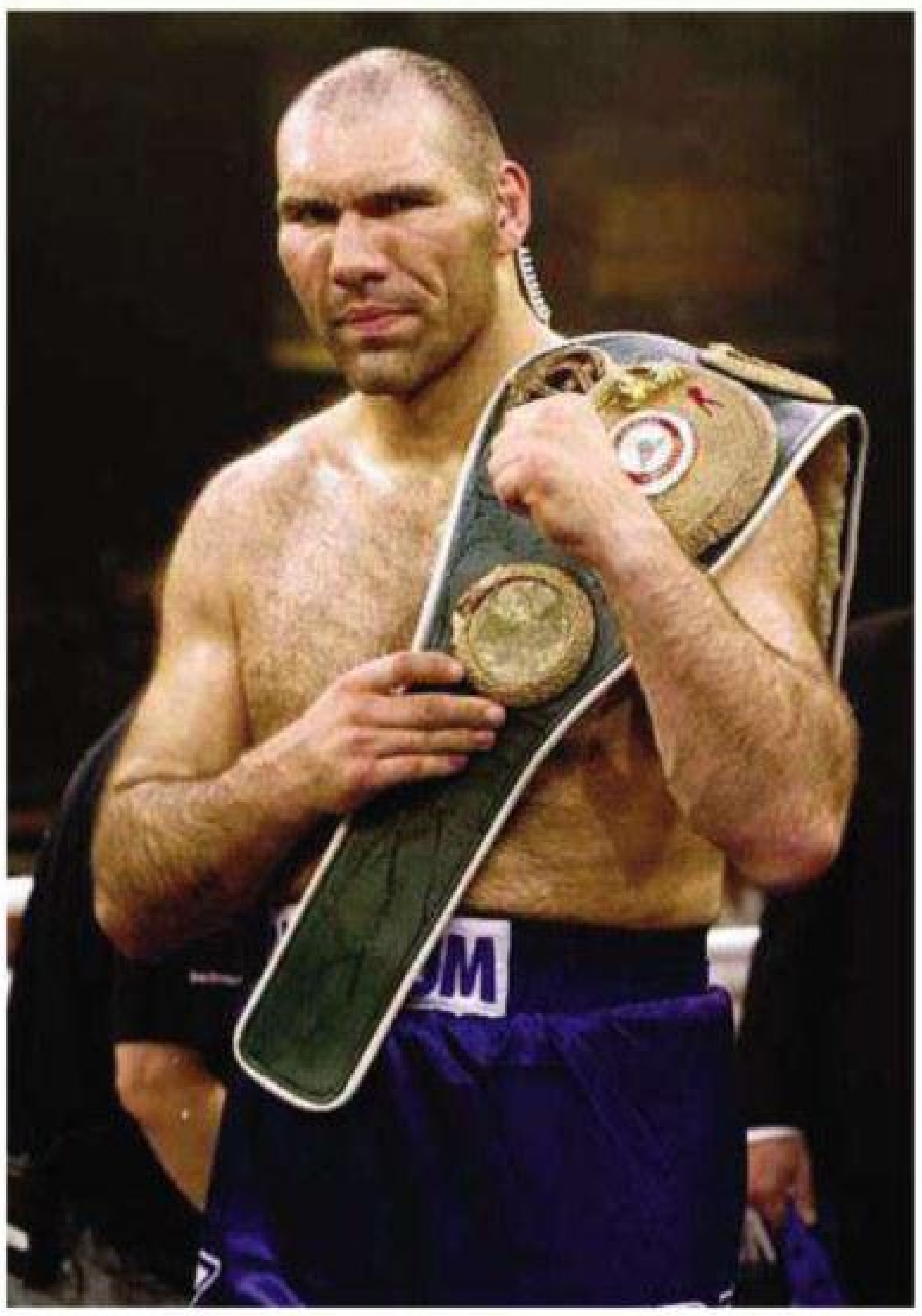
Police investigated a reported sighting of two alligators seen at Waveney Valley Lakes in Wortwell, Norfolk, at the beginning of June; but a thorough search of the 60-acre (24ha) site failed to turn up any carnivorous reptiles. *Sun, 3 June 2011.*

# Siberian wildman hunts

## Russian region claims proof for existence of the 'yeti'

In September, the governor of the Kemerovo coal-mining region of Siberia invited researchers from the US, Canada, China, Estonia and Sweden to share their research and stories of 'yeti' encounters at a day-long conference in the town of Tashtagol. The local administration announced on its website the discovery of yeti footprints on a research trip to its remote mountains. We are told: "During the expedition to the Azass-kaya cave, conference participants gathered indisputable proof that the Shoriya mountains are inhabited by the 'Snow Man'. They found his footprints, his supposed bed, and various markers with which the yeti marks his territory… In one of the detected tracks, Russian scientist Anatoly Fokin noted several hairs that might belong to the yeti." The collected 'artefacts' will be analysed in a special laboratory. The official statement went on to say that the region may create a research centre in the local university and a journal dedicated to the science of the yeti. "I know [the yeti] exist – I see them every day," said a conference participant, Robin Lynn, adding that she has a family of 10 yeti-like creatures living on her land in Michigan. Sceptics suggest the whole venture is a ruse to boost Siberian tourism.

RTS



**ABOVE:** Boxer Nakolei Valuev joined a 'yeti' expendition. **BELOW:** Footprint "proof".

"The Beast from the East" matches the yeti in size

A couple of weeks earlier, there had been another expedition, which included Nikolai Valuev, 38, the former heavyweight boxing champion, known as "the Beast from the East" – at 7ft (2m) tall and 23 stone (146kg) the tallest and heaviest boxing champion in history and a physical match for the yeti. Before beginning his two-day quest, the ex-boxer took part in a magical ritual on a local holy mountain, tying a ribbon to a tree and making a wish, Russian news agencies reported. "Valuev didn't manage to meet the yeti itself but on the way he discovered traces such as broken tree branches," said a local government spokesman. "By the time they reached the Azass cave, the expedition saw gigantic footprints." In 2009, local hunters witnessed what they described as "hairy hominoid creatures" near the Azass Cave. A footprint found nearby is shown below.

Sightings of the hairy hominids – also known as the Kuzbass Bigfoot – in the Kemerovo region are said to be up 300 per cent over the past two decades [see **FT255:10**]. Igor Burtsev, director of the International Centre of Hominology in Tashtagol, maintains that there is a group of around 30 of the creatures living in the mountains, where villagers say they steal sheep and hens. He claims they are relict Neanderthals. A recent sighting was reported by Raisa Sudochakova, 82, who said her dogs howled in fear and ran when they saw the yeti. "It was a tall creature, but not giant," she said. "It was covered in long brown-grey hair like a bear. It wasn't a bear – I have lived all my life in Siberia and wouldn't make that mistake. This creature walked like a human, or almost like a human." It was suggested she had seen a young yeti, as other witnesses have estimated the creatures are 7ft (2m) tall. *BBC News, RIA Novosti, 15 Sept; <i>, 17 Sept, 11 Oct; D.Mail, 4 Oct; Guardian, telegraph.co.uk, 10 Oct 2011.*

*For earlier Russian manimal sightings and hunts, see* **FT26:6, 45:51–52, 53:22, 54:22–23, 62:8, 67:32–34.**

## SIDELINES…

### BUGS SWEET TREAT

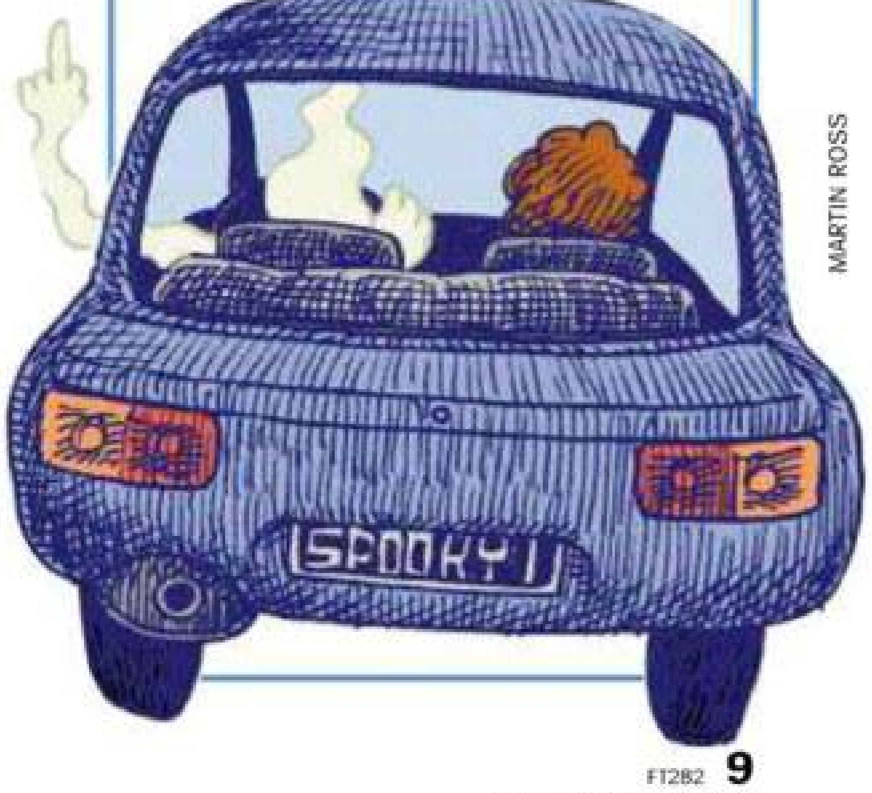
Health officials told an ice cream parlour in Missouri to stop selling cicada ice cream, despite customers loving the insect-filled delicacy. Sparky's Homemade Ice Cream in Columbia had sold out of the only batch within hours of its debut on 1 June. Employees had collected the cicadas, removed their wings, and covered them in brown sugar and chocolate. The base ice cream was brown sugar and butter flavour. *[AP] 7 June 2011.*

### BEES ON A PLANE

Airline passengers panicked when two hives of bees smuggled on a Boeing 757 for a flight from Blagoveshchensk in southeast Russia to Moscow escaped from cardboard boxes in mid-air and started swarming around the cabin. The bees were confined in a wardrobe in business section by sealing it with sticky tape, and were killed when the plane landed – which seems rather unfair. *[AFP] 24 Aug 2011.*

### DEAD MAN DRIVING

In 2005, a driver in Arizona was ticketed for running a red light after being caught on a security camera. The photo clearly showed him driving, with his wife as passenger. However, he had died in 2000; his family submitted his death certificate and the ticket was cancelled. Initially, it seemed the police had recycled old evidence, but then it was found that the photo showed buildings constructed *after* the man had died… *Phoenix (AZ) New Times, 1 Dec 2005.*



MARTIN ROSS

## SIDELINES...

### DARK IMAGININGS

Police and FBI raided a farmhouse in Hardin, Texas, after a tip-off by a woman claiming to be psychic that there were up to 30 bodies buried there. After finding nothing, the search was abandoned, but not before "a source" told CBS News that "a lot" of dismembered children's bodies had indeed been found, sparking a global news story. A spokesman said the tip-off had been taken seriously because the informant knew details about the inside of the house. *Guardian, 8 June 2011.*

### FRUIT ATTACKS APE

Police in Strongsville, about 20 miles (32km) south of Cleveland, Ohio, were on the lookout for a person disguised as a banana who attacked an advertising mascot dressed as a gorilla before running away on 29 June. The gorilla was not injured, just embarrassed. *WJW-TV, via Cleveland (OH) Sun News, 6 July 2011.*

### WHAT THE FLOCK?

Terence Pritchard of Redmarley in Gloucestershire reported 12 of his 13 rare breed sheep missing on 24 July after a neighbour said he heard a "commotion" in their field. Assisted by the local farming community, Mr Pritchard searched several square miles without result. However, a day later, all the Castlemilk Moorit sheep had mysteriously reappeared. *Western Daily Press, 26 July 2011.*

MARTIN ROSS

# YOU'RE FEELING SLEEPY

**UNUSUAL LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND ODD SOMNOLENT ACTIVITY**

GETTY IMAGES / GENERAL PHOTOGRAPHIC AGENCY

• Poppy Shingleton can fall asleep suddenly never knowing if it will be a day or a week before she wakes up. The 24-year-old nursing student at Southampton University has Kleine-Levin syndrome (also known as Sleeping Beauty sickness), a disorder affecting fewer than 1,000 people worldwide. "I slept through my 18th birthday," she said. "I've slept though Christmas and not woken up until after the New Year. It does get me down and I miss out on the social side." She wakes up during episodes to use the bathroom and eat, but still remains in a "dream-like" state. "I feel totally detached and spaced out," she said. "It's almost like I'm watching myself." The condition was only diagnosed two years after her first blackout at 18. The breakthrough came when friends of hers saw a TV documentary about the disorder and urged her to contact the Kleine-Levin Syndrome Foundation in the US. Experts don't know what causes the condition, but most sufferers grow out of it. Ms Shingleton's episodes are becoming less frequent – about every three months. *Metro, D.Mail, 23 June 2011.*

• Another victim of Kleine-Levin syndrome is Louisa Ball from Worthing, West Sussex, whose symptoms began in 2008 when she was 13. She can be out for as long as 10 days; she has slept through an entire family holiday and missed school exams. Then there's Lily Clarke, 21, from Haslemere in Surrey, who developed the condition in 2007, aged 17. She has slept through university exams, as well as Christmas and New Year, and like Ms Shingleton, she missed her 18th birthday. She now sleeps for an average of two months at a time roughly every seven months. Her parents wake her just long enough to be fed. *News of the World, 31 Jan 2010; Sun, 15 Aug 2011.*

## Louisa has slept through a holiday and missed exams

• Stephen Lee Davies, 43, a painter and decorator accused of raping a teenager, was freed on 4 July after a jury decided he was asleep at the time of the alleged offence. He claimed to suffer from sexomnia – the ability to have intercourse while asleep – and had no recollection of the encounter with the 16-year-old student. The girl had been staying at Mr Davies's home in Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire, when she became ill on 7 September 2009 and was told to share his bed because his room was cooler.

During his trial at Swansea Crown Court, his former wife told the jury that he would often become aroused in the middle of the night. "He was never violent and never forced me to have sex against my will," she said. "Sometimes his eyes were open but there was no one at home. It became a bit of a joke. I would say I must be pretty rubbish because he could not remember. Even if his eyes were open, he would not remember." Another former partner said she could have entire conversations with him, as well as full sexual intercourse, without him waking up.

Dr Chris Idzikowski, the director of the Edinburgh Sleep Centre and founder of the British Sleep Society, told the court that Mr Davies showed all the signs of suffering from sexomnia. "It affects mainly men who are deep sleepers. It can involve almost any sort of sexual activity and go on for 20 or 30 minutes," he said. *Metro, 30 June; D.Telegraph, Sun, Western Mail (Cardiff), 5 July 2011.*

• Another man escaped a rape charge on the same grounds last year. On 30 March, a court in Mons, western Belgium, acquitted a 30-year-old man known only as Frederic L of raping his four-year-old daughter. The child's mother, who had taken the case to appeal after a lower court returned the same verdict, called the decision "catastrophic". State prosecutors had asked for an eight-year prison sentence. *D.Mail, 31 Mar 2010.*

• Belle Floor, 32, a school administrator from Almelo in the Netherlands, also suffers from sexomnia, causing her to masturbate in her sleep. Her condition means she is afraid to let boyfriends stay over in case she embarrasses herself at night. Her ex-partner Justin, 47, couldn't accept it was happening without her knowledge and eventually it caused them to separate, because he took it as a slur on his sexual prowess. Floor first discovered the disorder in 1999 when Justin confronted her. "Out of the blue one evening he asked me why I played with myself at night," she said. "I denied it because I couldn't remember ever doing it." *Sun, 1 Dec 2009.*

- Sudoku provided the strongest insomnia cure yet, sending a woman who had not slept in 11 years to sleep for 12 hours. Anastasia Haletskaya, 20, who suffers from vegetovascular dystonia syndrome, said she felt "wonderful" after dozing off in her home in Novosibirsk, Russia. "I was doing some puzzles when suddenly I felt myself lying down and closing my eyes," she said. "The next thing I know I woke up and my mum told me I'd been out for 12 hours. I felt wonderful." Her doctor, Olga Belyaeva, was baffled. "I've never seen anything like it," she said. *Sunday Times, 28 Aug 2011.*

- A doctor who was almost four times over the alcohol limit when he crashed his car was banned from driving for a year and fined £650 on 21 June by magistrates in Bury, Lancashire, even though prosecutors accepted that he was asleep at the time. Donald Clegg, 59, from Prestwich, Lancs, admitted driving with excess alcohol while in a state of "parasomnia" on 8 December 2010. He was wearing a dressing gown. *Metro, D.Mirror, 22 June 2011.*

- A suspended Queensland policewoman beat a drug-driving charge in July after her lawyers successfully argued that she was "sleep-driving". Lynette Jones crashed her car into a power pole not far from her house in March 2010 while off-duty. She had overdosed on 18 Stilnox sleeping pills washed down with a bottle of wine. *(Queensland) Courier-Mail, 2–3 July 2011.*

- Two weeks later, a Scotland Yard murder detective escaped a drink-driving ban after claiming he crashed his car into a front garden near his home in Kent while asleep. Bradley Clayton, 31, was also found with cocaine on him but was cleared after saying "a friend" had planted the drug on him. Dr Chris Idzikowski (who had helped Stephen Davies dodge the rape charge) gave evidence on his behalf, claiming he had sleepwalked before. Clayton was fined £500 at Maidstone Crown Court for driving with excess alcohol, but the judge accepted that he was asleep at the time. *Sun, 16 July 2011.*

- A driver clocked doing 130mph (209km/h) on a motorway in St Gallen, Switzerland, thanked the police who caught her, because she had been fast asleep. She said the camera flash woke her to regain control of her car. The 27-year-old Macedonian woman, who was driving her husband, two children and mother, had her licence confiscated. *Sun, 17 June 2011.*

## STRANGE GAS ATTACKS

Police in the billionaire's retreat of Porto Cervo on the Costa Smeralda in Sardinia believe thieves who made off with 315,000 euro (£280,000) in cash and jewels in late August used sleeping gas on their victims. They sneaked into the rented holiday villa of a Milanese pharmaceuticals tycoon and left with a haul worth about 300,000 euro. The businessman's 42-year-old wife, her mother and their daughter were all in the house, along with a servant, but no one heard the burglars, even though they took the windows off their hinges to get in. At the villa next door, two holidaymakers found a watch and 15,000 euro in cash missing. They told police they woke up feeling weak and dazed.

In July, "gassing gangs" were reported to be targeting caravans and camper vans in France. Thieves sprayed sleeping gas in through air vents before breaking in. Then in early August, at least six houses on an estate in Rincón de la Victoria on the Costa del Sol in Spain were burgled by thieves thought to have used sleeping gas. The raiders loaded up their victims' cars with their loot before driving off, having taken the keys to the vehicles. One resident, José Luis Gómez, was quoted as saying the victims had woken "dizzy, with headaches, vomiting and stinging throats". *Metro, 12 Aug; Guardian, 31 Aug 2011.*

GETTY IMAGES / RETROFILE / GEORGE MARKS

- One of the most famous mystery gas attacks was the "Mad Gasser of Matoon" in Illinois in 1944. A number of people in the town fell victim to a sweet-smelling vapour which caused light-headedness and vomiting. Jonathan Downes of the Centre for Fortean Zoology appears to have solved the case, the culprit being a young man – known to be 'disturbed' – who had a grudge against some local residents and was making the toxic fumes at home. See **FT216:36–39**.

## SIDELINES...

### GAS MAN

Pensioner Chen Jejun, 71, says he has kept aches and pains at bay for 42 years by drinking petrol every day – 3.5 litres (6.2 pints) a month – in Shuijiang, China. *Sun, 15 July 2011.*

### CAR RAGE

When his Nissan car broke down on 2 July, a 20-year-old man from Wanaka, New Zealand, jumped on the car's roof, smashed the windows and set fire to it. He told police the car had been set alight by persons unknown, but later confessed and faced a charge of wasting police time. A few days later, Lauriano Lovato was jailed for three months in Arizona for shooting his Camaro car through the windshield and into the dashboard when it wouldn't start. *MX News (Brisbane), 4 July; Queensland Courier Mail, 13 July 2011.*

### KILLER SEAWEED

French authorities have warned holidaymakers about a thick blanket of slimy 'killer seaweed' along the coasts of Brittany and Normandy, after the carcasses of 28 wild boars were found. All were thought to have been gassed. As it rots, the seaweed releases hydrogen sulphide when it comes into contact with nitrates flowing into the sea from intensive pig farms. In 2009, a man on a seaweed-clearing team was hospitalised in a coma, while a horse-rider passed out and his horse died [**FT258:11**]. *D.Mail, 28 July 2011.*

MARTIN ROSS

## SIDELINES...

### PLANT EATS BIRD

Nigel Hewett-Cooper, a nurseryman from West Pennard, Somerset, found the remains of a blue tit in his monkey cup pitcher plant (*Nepenthes x mixta*). "In the wild [in southeast Asia] they have been known to kill mice and the largest pitcher plants kill rats," he said. "But for a plant in Britain to kill a fully-grown blue tit is amazing." The carnivorous plants exude sticky sweet nectar, which traps their prey (mostly insects). *D.Telegraph, Sun, 4 Aug; BBC News, 5 Aug 2011.*

### SERBIAN SCAM

A conman in Serbia stole 350 coffins worth £30,000 after pretending to be a council worker. He claimed he was in charge of moving bodies from a cemetery and got carpenter Pero Meric to make the caskets. "We wonder what on earth he is going to do with 350 coffins," said a police spokesman in Cacak. *Metro, 18 Aug 2011.*

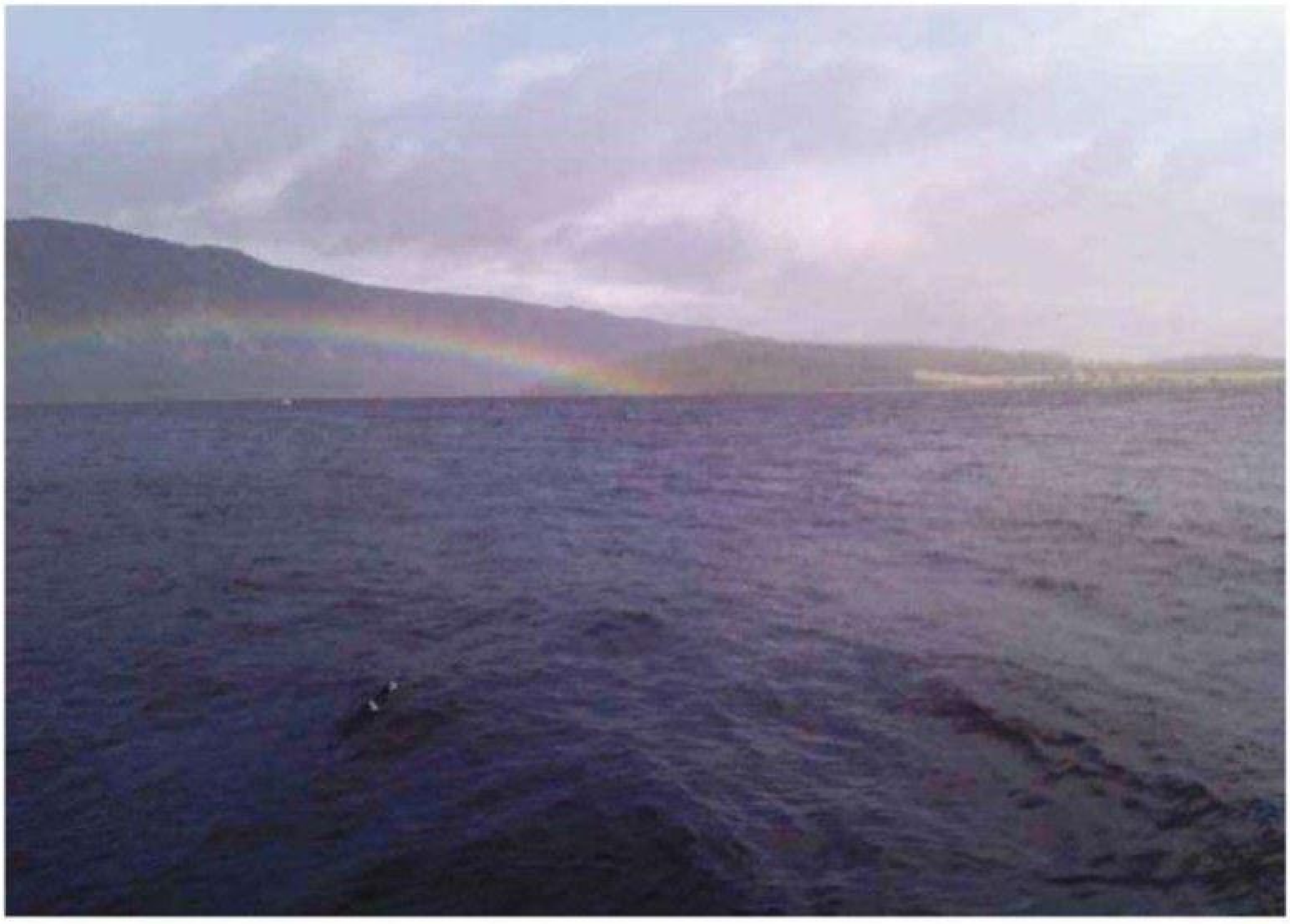
### CANNIBAL GOLDFISH

Shaggy and Daphne, two of six goldfish abandoned during the February earthquake in New Zealand, were found alive after 134 days trapped in their 100-litre (22 gallon) tank without food or power for their filter. They were in offices of Quantum Chartered Accountants in downtown Christchurch, made off-limits after the quake. One fish was dead, but three others had disappeared, presumably eaten by the survivors (with a weed salad). *[AP] 28 July 2011.*

### EDIBLE RELICS

Michael and Francesca Bennett created the Museum of Celebrity Leftovers at their Old Boatstore beachside café in Kingsand, Cornwall. In July, they were selling the café and museum. Items on offer (in airtight jars) included a chunk of bread pudding nibbled by the Prince of Wales (£300) and a crust from David Bailey's cheese sandwich (£100). *Sunday Telegraph, 10 July 2011.*

# COME ON IN, THE WATER'S LOVELY!



JON ROWE

JON ROWE

## ENIGMATIC HUMPS IN LOCH NESS

Jon Rowe, 31, spends a lot of time out on his fish farm platform in Loch Ness, which is about 50m (164ft) from the shore, not far from Dores. At about 12.30pm on 7 September, he saw a rainbow and took a photograph. He told *Fortean Times* that almost immediately he spotted a "dark mass moving through the water" and took a second photograph (above, detail at left), which shows two enigmatic humps about 20m (66ft) away. They couldn't be buoys or moorings, he said, as there are no visible anchor ropes; and there are no rocks in the vicinity. "I work on the loch every day and I've never seen anything like it," he told the *Daily Star* (14 Sept 2011). The dark patches in the water appear to be a shadow or wave effect rather than the dark mass Mr Rowe refers to. He admits that the water in the loch has a peat content but says that this doesn't cloud the water out in the currents. "On shore you get more sediment with the slower moving water," he said. Whether the humps belong to a resident monster or something else is open to question. *Jon Rowe, pers. comm., 17 Sept 2011.*

**DESIRABLE ITEMS WANTED**

Channel 4's Hit Series Four Rooms is back and looking for more extraordinary items to feature in the second series.

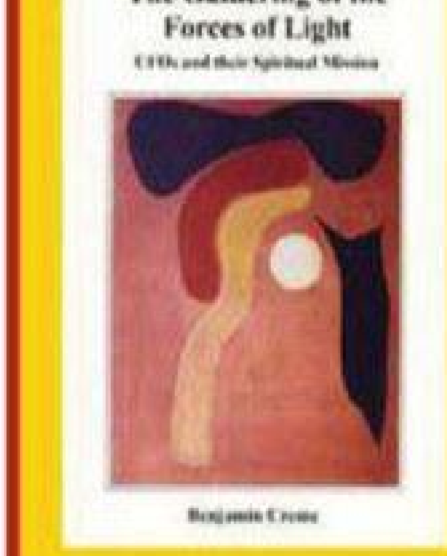
**Do you own something unique, rare or beautiful that you want to sell? Our four top dealers are ready to part with their cash for something truly exceptional.**

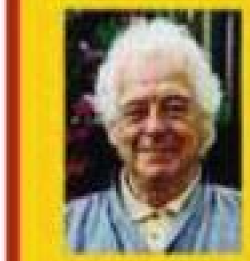
**From iconic memorabilia to beautiful or rare objects, or even the grotesque and macabre, your item could be bought for life changing amounts of money.**

If you own an item that you would like to show the dealers, we want to hear from you!

To apply please call **0207 861 8499**
Or email a photo and description to
**fourrooms@talkbackthames.tv**

**The Gathering of the Forces of Light – *UFOs and their Spiritual Mission***


The Gathering of the Forces of Light
UFOs and their Spiritual Mission
Benjamin Creme



ISBN 978-90-71484-46-9
Share International
240pp, £12
photos: Benjamin Creme
Maitreya's 'star' over Costa Rica, January 2009

Information and lectures
call: 0207 482 1113

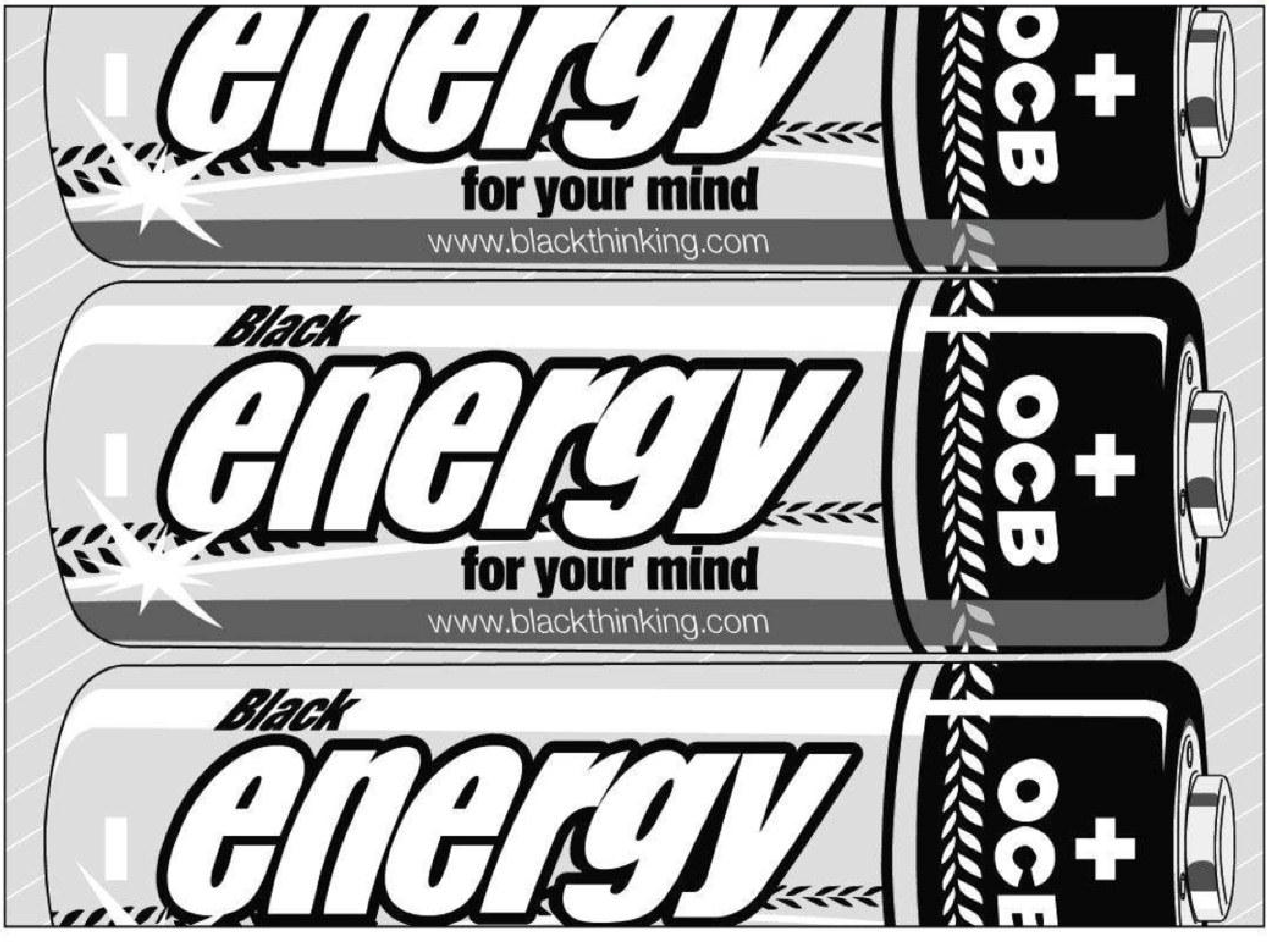
Benjamin Creme's new book is about UFOs, but with a difference. It is written by someone who has worked with them and knows about them from the inside. Creme sees the presence of UFOs as planned and of immense value for the people of Earth.

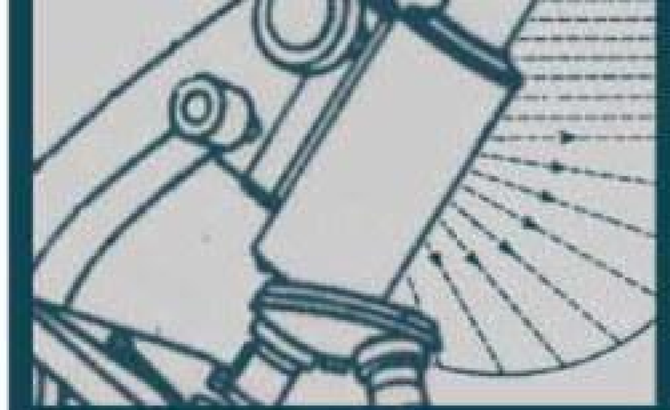
He shows how all the planets of our solar system are inhabited, but on physical levels beyond present human sight, the so-called etheric planes. The spacecraft are constructed on the same principle; they too are in etheric matter and have complete control of energies in space. Our Space Brothers are responsible not only for crop circles but also for preparing the way on Earth for a new technology of light which will give us unlimited power from the sun. When we banish war for ever and are endeavouring to live in right relationship, that technology will be ours.

For the Spiritual Hierarchy of both our own and the sister planets of our system, right human relationship involves the end of competition and the beginning of an era of co-operation with sharing, justice and freedom as its hallmarks.

Fantasy? Benjamin Creme writes with such cogency and authority that it is difficult to gainsay his message. We leave it to the readers to come to their own conclusion; in any case, according to the author, the truth will soon be apparent for all to see, awakening humanity to their own divinity and the establishment of the rule of spiritual law on Earth.

**www.share-international.org**





MATT PATTINSON

# BREAKING THE LIGHT BARRIER

With the Theory of General Relativity, it was accepted that nothing could travel faster than light. **DAVID HAMBLING** finds that some neutrinos have ignored the road signs.

SPEED
LIMIT
186,282
MILES
PER SECOND

ETTIENNE GILFILLAN

Light travels at 299,792,458 metres per second (approximately 186,282 miles per second) in a vacuum, nature's ultimate speed limit. As Einstein showed, pushing anything past the speed of light would break a variety of physical laws. This is key to his celebrated work on relativity. Now that century-old speed limit seems to have been broken.

The researchers involved were not trying to break the light barrier. Rather, they were looking at whether it was possible to change one type of neutrino into another as part of OPERA (a contrived acronym from Oscillation Project with Emulsion-tRacking Apparatus). But they found that neutrinos from a particle accelerator at CERN in Switzerland were reaching a detector in the Gran Sasso cavern in Italy some 60 nanoseconds earlier than they would if travelling at the supposedly unbeatable light speed.[1] Neutrinos can pass through solid matter, and these were fired in a straight line through the Earth's crust.

Faced with such an incredible result, the scientists' first reaction has been to question the measurements themselves. Their neutrinos were only fractionally faster than light; over the 700km (435 mile) distance, they were about 18m (59ft) ahead.

The OPERA detector is deep underground to keep it away from cosmic rays, and its location can't be directly measured by GPS; but by measuring the ends of the tunnel it is located in, the detector itself could be pinpointed to within 20cm (8in). As a further precaution, the scientists used atomic clocks accurate to within a nanosecond to synchronise the two labs. The instruments involved are so exquisitely sensitive that the researchers were able to track the two laboratories drifting apart on their tectonic plates at 1cm (0.4in) a year, as well as a 6cm (2.4in) lurch caused by the L'Aquila earthquake.

The results from thousands of tests, gathered and checked over three years, have reached a statistical significance known as 'six Sigma', indicating there is less than one chance in 500 million that these results are a random error. Six Sigma is a gold standard for scientists, and should be enough to convince everyone of the reality of an effect. Unless, of course, the experiment itself is flawed. The researchers themselves are pitching their findings less as a staggering new discovery, more a request to help find the error that's messing up their experiment.

"The OPERA measurement is at odds with well-established laws of nature," noted CERN's own press release announcing the result.[2]

Carl Sagan's old saw that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence has been wheeled out many times in reporting this story, and there is plenty of other research showing that neutrinos travel at light speed but no more. The defensiveness is understandable, given the huge implications of breaking the light speed barrier. Relativistic effects mean that as an object nears the speed of light, its mass increases, and this makes it increasingly hard to accelerate further. An object at the speed of light would have infinite mass. An object travelling faster than light would have a mass described by the square root of a negative number, which makes no sense in physical terms.

**At the speed of light, time stops; go faster and you're travelling back in time**

Relativity also means that time passes more slowly as you approach light speed. At the speed of light, time stops; go faster than the speed of light and... you're travelling backwards in time. While Einstein's equations can describe what happens in this situation, it quickly leads to problems with cause and effect. A particle which arrives before it set out could trip a switch preventing it from setting out. This is a variation on the old paradox of a time-traveller who kills his own grandfather before his own parent is conceived, and physics cannot (yet) cope with paradoxes.

There are other technical issues too; light speed is fundamental to the so-called Standard Model of physics, and this result threatens it.

So, could some unexpected error be creeping in? Sensitive instruments can be affected by faint, distant forces. CERN researchers have to take into account the effects of tides on some of their experiments.[3] Another CERN project was affected by an anomaly which cropped up at regular intervals, and which turned out to be caused by a train passing through a nearby tunnel. One laboratory in California eventually tracked down strange readings to leakage from a microwave oven used by researchers.

As far as the OPERA results go, scientists are still looking for possible sources of error. One suggestion is that the path of the neutrinos takes them 17km (10.6 miles) closer to the centre of the Earth, and relativistic gravity effects may be a factor. Or there may be more subtle effects influencing the accuracy of GPS.[4] Not only does the gravitational field vary, but orbiting satellite instruments have shown problems due to fluctuations in Earth's magnetic field, which contains weak spots and even patches where the magnetic polarity is reversed.[5]

The more exciting possibility is that the results are genuine. Some scientists have suggested that the neutrinos might be taking a shortcut, going through folds in the additional dimensions that exist according to the Standard Model.[6] How or why this could happen is unclear, but it might allow travel from A to B that was effectively faster than light speed without actually breaking the speed limit.

The vast majority of physicists believe there must be an error somewhere. What's encouraging is that the researchers dared to publish their results, knowing they would not be believed.

"Science frequently progresses by overthrowing the established paradigms," says the CERN press release. Maybe it's time for a paradigm to be overthrown. The speed of light has always been a bit of an inconvenient limitation, and without it things might be very interesting.

Next stop, warp drive.

## NOTES

**1** Measurement of the neutrino velocity with the OPERA detector in the CNGS beam: http://bit.ly/pE004d (arxiv.org/abs).

**2** http://bit.ly/pOYLd7 (public.web.cern.ch).

**3** http://bit.ly/oV4C19 (citeseerx.ist.psu.edu).

**4** The Reference Frame science blog: http://bit.ly/ngLO6u (motls.blogspot.com).

**5** BBC 2, *Horizon*: "The Core", 2011.

**6** *New Scientist*: http://bit.ly/rOFS5J.

FORTEAN TIMES PRESENTS A BOOK TO END ALL BOOKS...

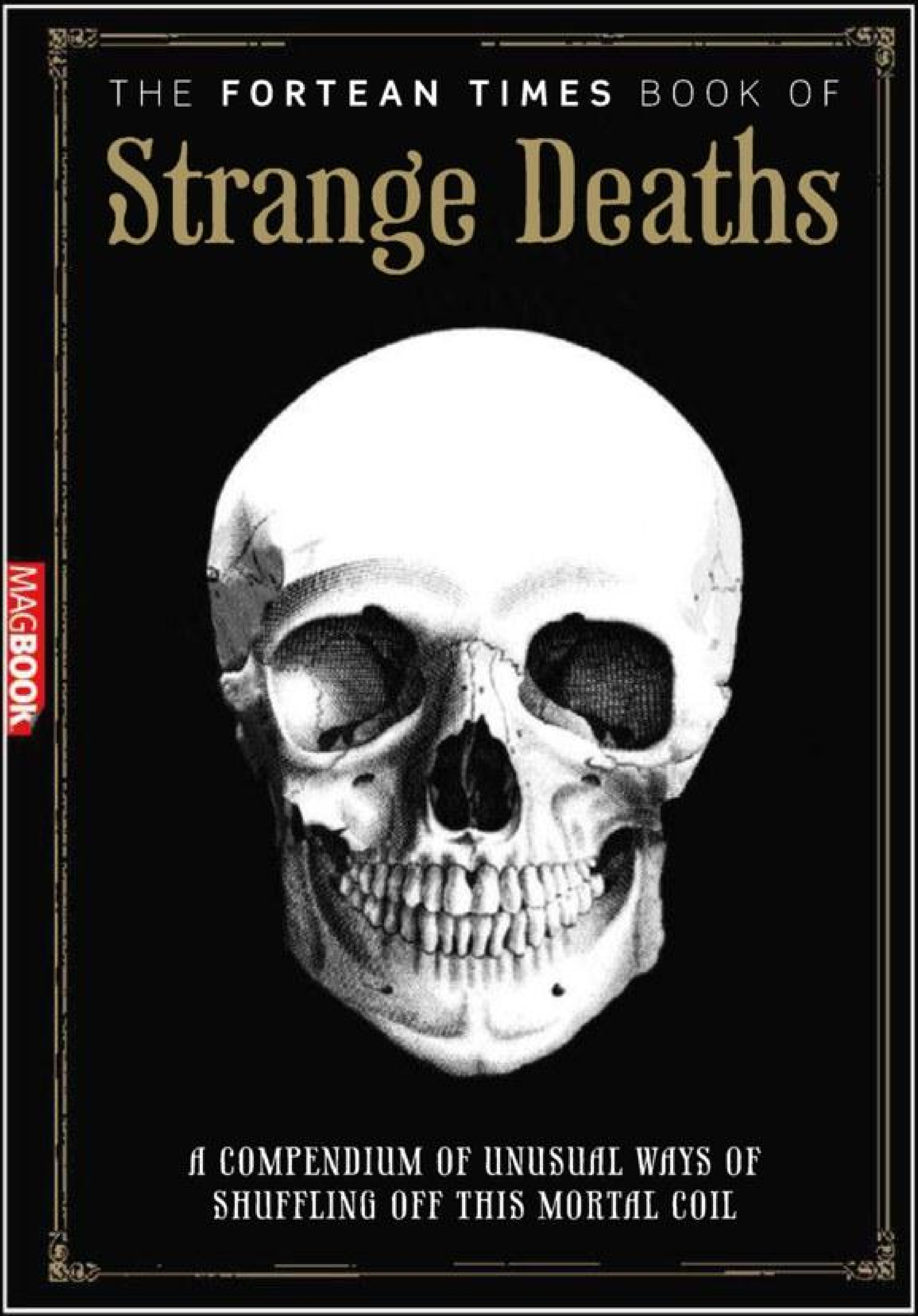
Death comes to us all in the end... but some people manage to make a more memorable exit than others!

ANIMAL LOVER POISONED BY PARROT FARTS

DINER KILLED BY FLYING LAMB CHOP

CIRCUS DWARF EATEN BY HIPPO

MOURNER CRUSHED BY COFFIN



THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF
Strange Deaths

A COMPENDIUM OF UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

ANIMAL LOVER POISONED BY PARROT FARTS

DINER KILLED BY FLYING LAMB CHOP

CIRCUS DWARF EATEN BY HIPPO

MOURNER CRUSHED BY COFFIN

TO ORDER DIRECT
CALL 0844 844 0053
OR VISIT
MAGBOOKS.COM
FOR PRINT AND
DIGITAL EDITIONS

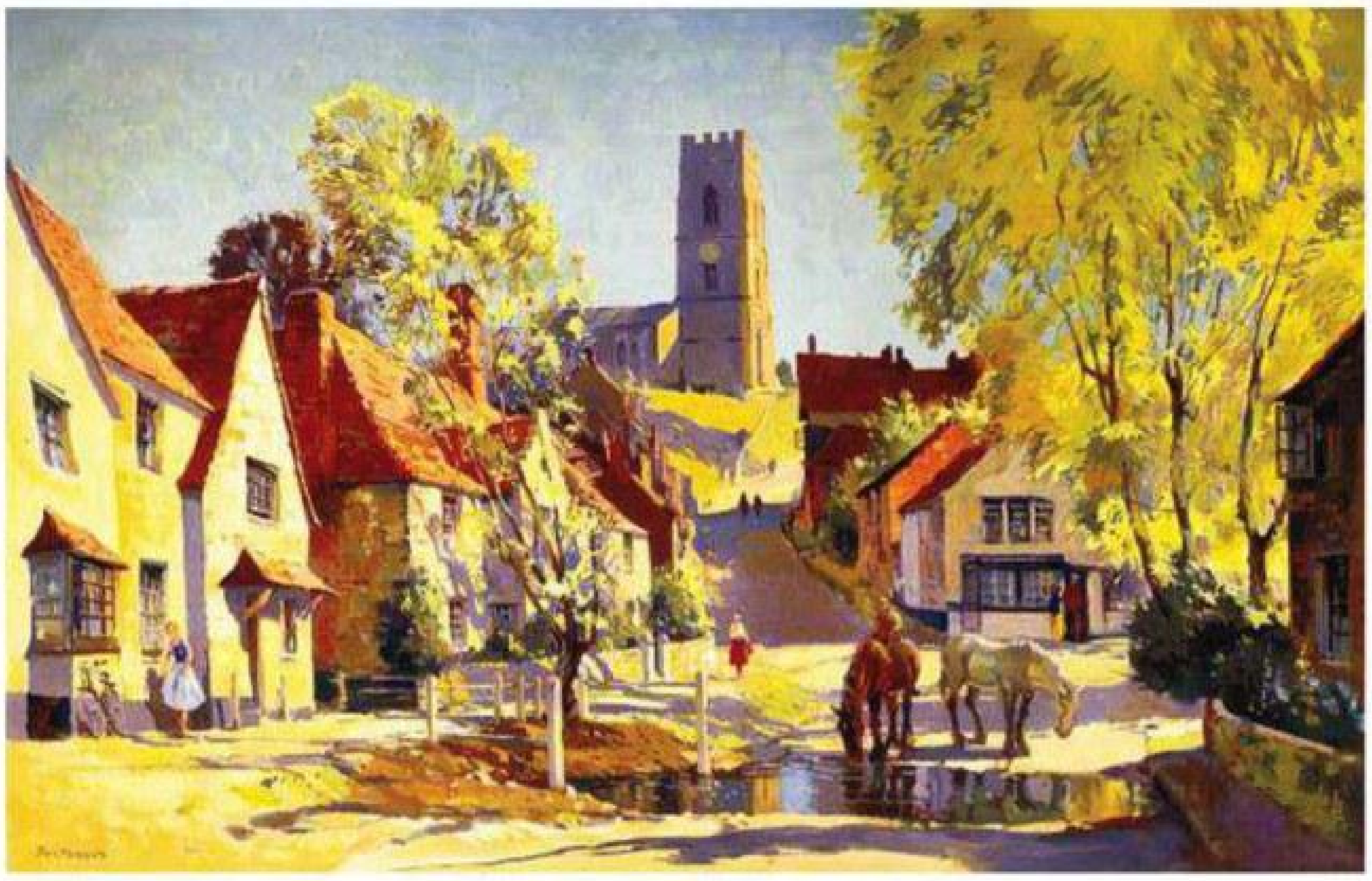
£6.99

OUT NOW!

ALSO AVAILABLE TO
PURCHASE FROM
amazon.co.uk
WHSmith

MATT PATTERSON

**ALAN MURDIE** re-examines a classic time-slip – or case of retrocognition.



SCIENCE AND SOCIETY PICTURE LIBRARY / NRM PICTORIAL COLLECTIONS

## A SUFFOLK ADVENTURE

*Fortean Times* has recently discussed the famous 'Versailles Adventure' [**FT278:30–35**], carrying on a debate that has rolled on for a century, since the story first appeared in print in 1911. An interesting example from the UK is a case that occurred in 1957. Details in this case so impressed researcher Andrew Mackenzie (1911–2001) that he featured it in his book on time-slips, *Adventures In Time* (1997), which is on its way to becoming a modern classic of the genre.

The case involved three 15-year-old naval cadets who in the autumn of 1957 were on a map-reading exercise near the village of Kersey in Suffolk (pictured above in a 1957 painting by Jack Merriott and below in an undated postcard). They were in a cheerful mood and heard the sound of church bells. As they approached the village, the autumnal leaf colours changed to those of spring, the church bells stopped, and everything became still. William Laing, the boy leading the group, recalled: "It was a ghost village, so to speak. It was almost as if we had walked back in time… I experienced an overwhelming feeling of sadness and depression in Kersey, but also a feeling of unfriendliness and unseen watchers which sent shivers up one's back…"

No one was to be seen in the village and some of the buildings appeared to be in an abandoned state, perhaps suggesting the time of the Great Plague of 1665 or the period following the 14th-century 'Black Death'. Walking past what they took to be a butcher's shop, they looked inside: "There were no tables or counters, just two or three whole oxen carcasses which had been skinned and in places were quite green with age. There was a green-painted door and windows with smallish glass panes, one at the front and one at the side, rather dirty-looking. I remember that as we three looked through that window in disbelief at the green and mouldy green carcasses… the general feeling certainly was one of disbelief and unreality… Who would believe that in 1957 the health authorities would allow such conditions?" The cadets stayed about 30 minutes in the place but eventually became unnerved and ran from the scene.

Some 30 years later, two of the men were in contact and recalled the experience and brought it to the attention of Andrew MacKenzie, who considered it might constitute an example of retrocognition, whereby the three boys had seen Kersey not as it was in 1957, but at an earlier historical period. Later, William Laing came to Britain and revisited Kersey with Mackenzie to re-trace their route.

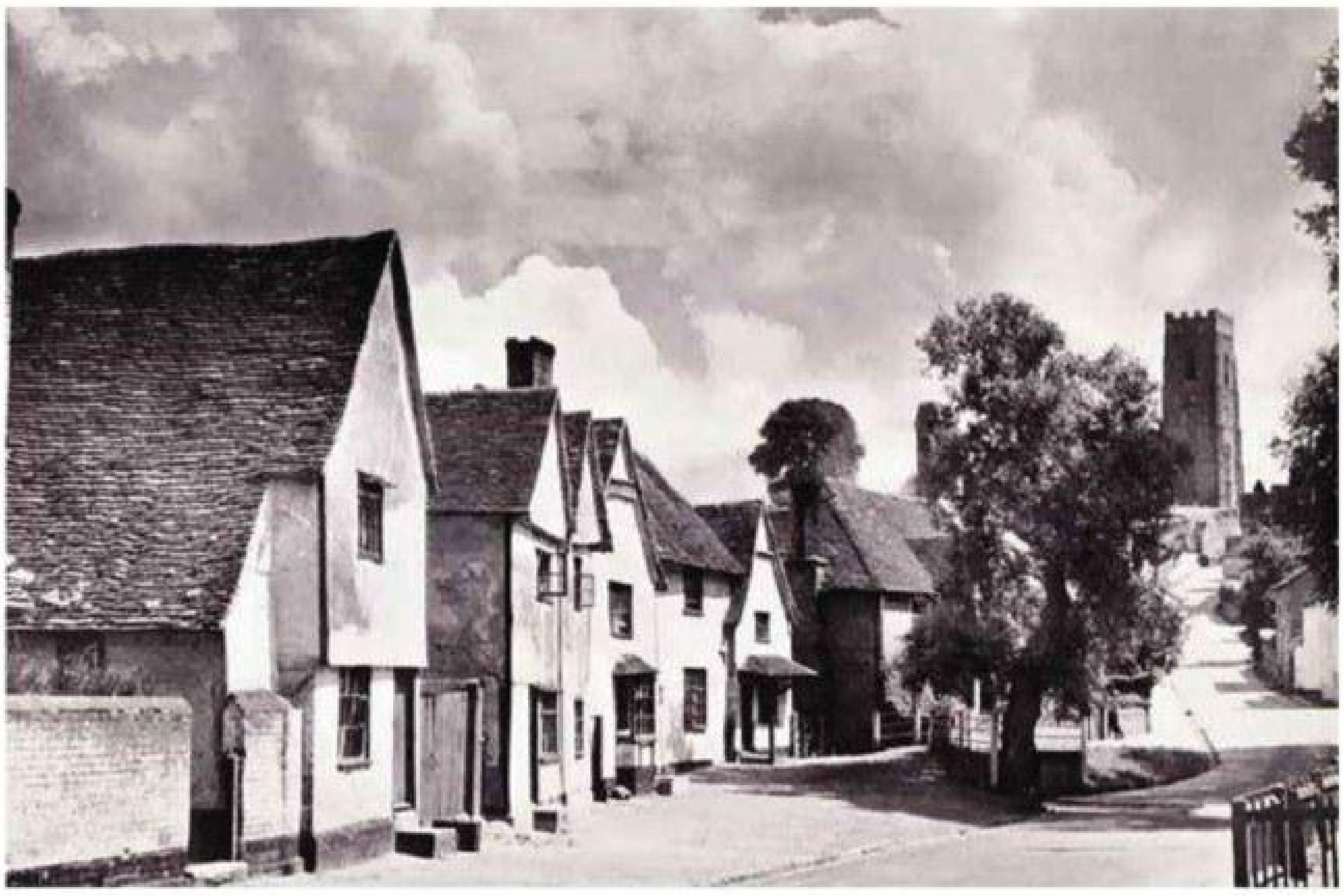
> "It was a ghost village… it was as if we had stepped back in time"

MacKenzie was particularly impressed by discovering that the building identified as a butcher's shop had been one at least as early as 1790, though by 1957 it was a private house. This, together with incidental details in the story, such as the silence and the profound sense of unease, led MacKenzie to conclude it might have been a vision of the village around 1420 (some seven decades after the first appearance of the 'Black Death').

However, this interpretation has now been challenged by Mike Dash in an article called "When Three British Boys Travelled to Medieval England (Or Did They?)", published on the Smithsonian blog 'Past Imperfect'. He proposes the three boys – all strangers to Suffolk – were victims of disorientation in an unfamiliar rural setting, and that the passage of time had distorted their recollections until their odd impressions were turned into a full-blown ghost story.

Furthermore, I came across a suggestive account of a visit to Kersey written in 1946 by ghost author James Wentworth Day (1899–1983) carried in his book *Harvest Adventure.* Reeling from the election of a Labour Government in 1945, the arch-Conservative Day went on a nostalgic trip around East Anglia to recover, and he visited Kersey:

"We dipped down a headlong lane, by a mill that had seen Chaucer's England, and into the main street of Kersey. It is a sudden vision – an illuminated page out of another England, a coloured echo of a gayer age… Eaves rose above eaves, and half timbered houses stood demure in primrose and black beside a rose-red mullioned Tudor house whose porch – almost a little tower – and great oak door, defiant with broad nails, had stood there before Elizabeth was born".



There is a stream running across the main street (known as 'the Splash'), and I can confirm that Kersey can still evoke such feelings today in 2011. It remains a quiet, unspoilt village where one may easily arrive and see no one.

It is apparent that Day's instinctive narrative impression on arrival at Kersey was of one stepping back in time. Day details going into a pub and chatting to the landlord (I suspect the conversation may be largely invented for literary purposes) but he describes the inn being "...cold and silent, with only a month-old advertisement of a ploughing match to tell you that there were no Tudor gallants about in doublet and hose and ruff." While I think it unlikely the boys were avid readers of Day, is it possible that just over a decade after Day's visit, the three navel cadets shared the same strong impressions of the past on going into Kersey?

As regards the deserted butcher's shop, Mike Dash challenges whether shops from the 14th and 15th centuries would have glass windows, and even considers "the question of whether a mediæval village would have had a butcher's shop... it stretches credulity to imagine a shop with two or three whole ox carcasses in stock as early as 1420, especially when it's remembered that Kersey had its own weekly market, where fresh meat would have been available, and which would have provided fierce competition." These are serious points, although they do not explain the eerie feelings, or what the boys actually recall seeing inside the building, which by 1957 was a private residence.

One possibility is that the sense of abandonment was influenced by another building in the area. Day mentions that: "Beyond Kersey and the gaunt white bones of its great Augustinian Priory, spectral in a farmyard, lies a wood, and near it is marked the site of a Pest House, that grim building to which the poor stricken victims of the Black Death were taken to die and rot." Could the boys have come across this site, with the impression contributing to an imagined sense of desolation, this later being mingled with their memories of the building in the village?

Alternatively, could it be the three boys simply looked in the window of a cottage where the residents still practised the rustic tradition of salting and preserving sides of bacon for winter? This custom persisted in East Anglia in remote areas until at least 1965, with the joints being casually hung up in sitting rooms and parlours. Therefore, it is possible what the boys thought were ox carcasses were in fact sides of bacon. CE Hennels noted an example of the practice in an East Anglian farmhouse in the 1960s and observed how "...the joints seemed enormous... As the meat mellowed and hardened, it changed colour. Some dark, some light, and some as yellow as the guineas that chinked in the washleather bags on market day."

Sources: Andrew Mackenzie: *Adventures in Time*, 1997; James Wentworth Day: *Farming Adventure*, 1946; Mike Dash: "When Three British Boys Travelled to Medieval England (Or Did They?)" – see http://bit.ly/mPQVAi (blogs.smithsonianmag.com), July 2011; CE Hennels: "The pig on the wall", *East Anglian Magazine*, Dec 1965.

However, there are some cases of apparent time-slips and ghostly encounters which remain more difficult to explain...

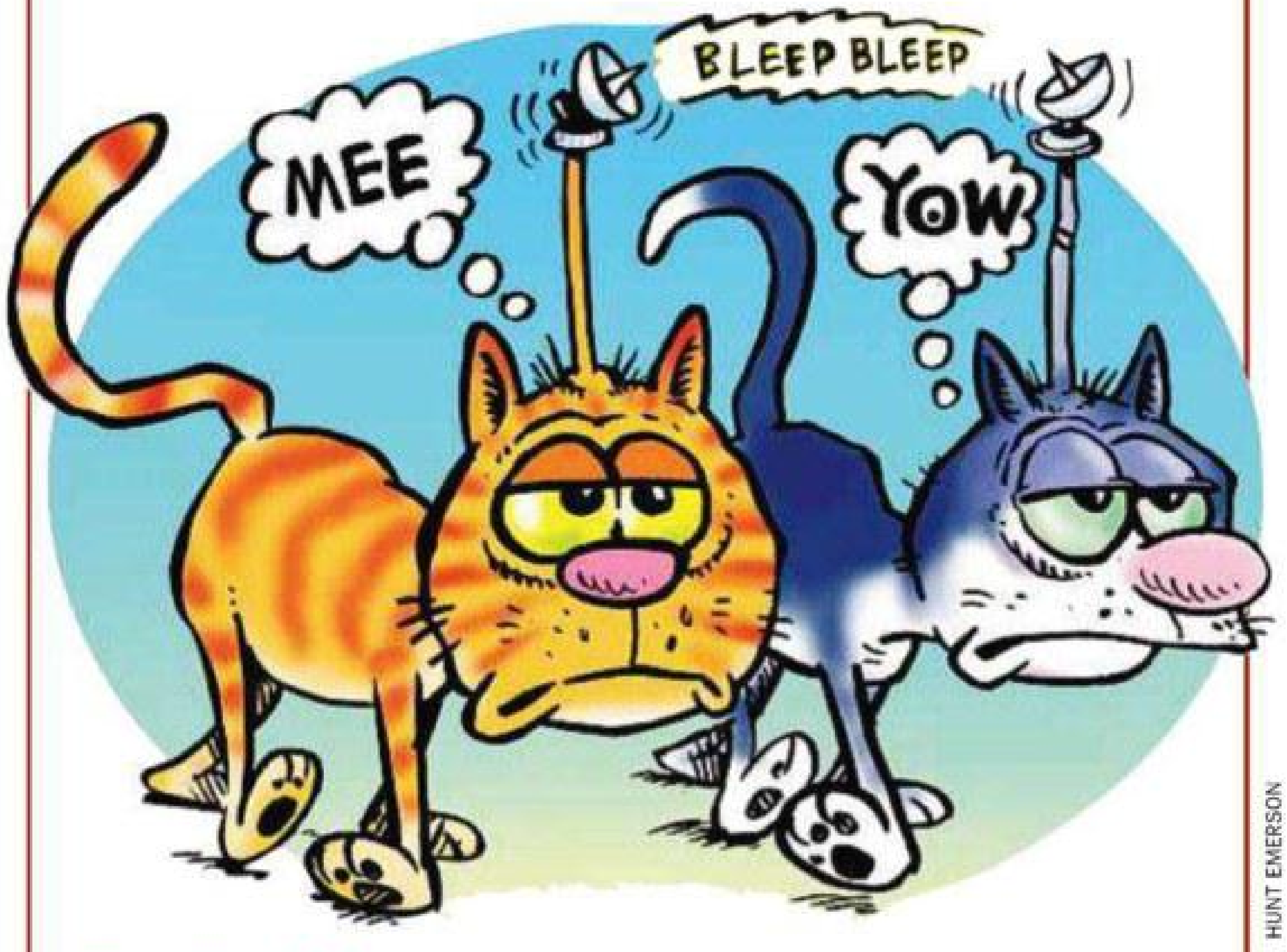
# Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

## 148. CATS' WHISKERS

### The myth

Cats use their whiskers to balance. If, for any reason, they suffer damaged whiskers, they are no longer able to balance.



HUNT EMERSON

### The "truth"

The idea that a cat employs its splendid whiskers in much the same way as a Victorian tightrope walker would his long bendy pole is surprisingly widely held. It's hard to imagine where it might have originated; in fact, balance in cats, as in humans, is largely a function of the inner ear. Cats have what is called "tactile hair" on various parts of their bodies, most noticeably growing out of their faces. Their whiskers, or vibrissæ, are deeply rooted, heavily endowed with nerve endings, and very mobile, and provide detailed information concerning air currents and air pressure. They are mainly used for navigation in low light, and for helping to determine the direction from which prey odours and movements are coming.

### Sources

Dr Andrew Edney: *RSPCA complete cat care manual*, Dorling Kindersley, 2006; Eldredge *et al*: *Cat owner's home veterinary handbook*, 3rd edition, Wiley Publishing, 2008; http://s.coop/rspca; http://s.coop/cathealth.

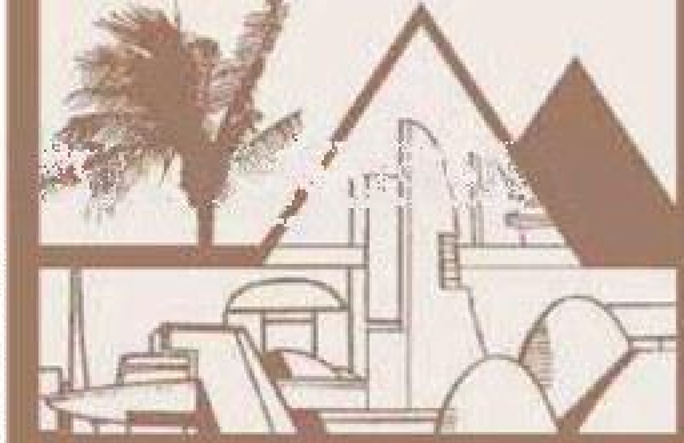
### Disclaimer

It seems that whiskers are still slightly mysterious – for instance, authorities disagree on whether or not a cat uses them to judge the width of its body, thus avoiding entering spaces that are too tight for it.

### Mythchaser

A reader asks whether it's true that cows lie down when it's about to rain. This sounds like the sort of folk belief that ought to be fairly easily dismissed – but so far, I've struggled to find anything definitive one way or the other. In particular, it would be interesting to know whether this tradition exists in non-Anglophone countries; if bovine barometers appear to predict precipitation in places where it comes only rarely, that would be undeniably impressive. Please write to *FT*'s letters page, if you feel mooooved to do so.

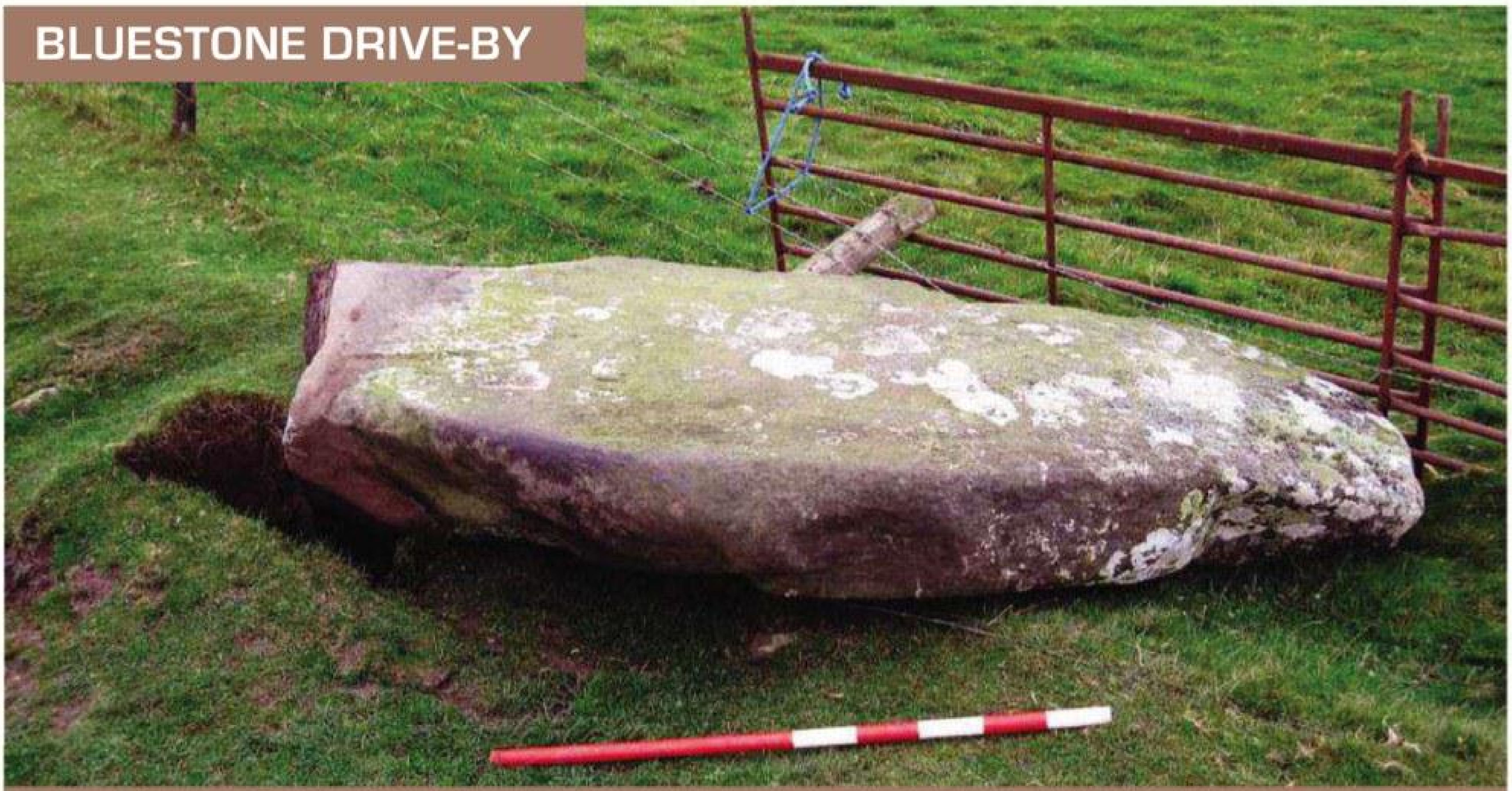
FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters


MATT PATTINSON

# ARCHÆOLOGY

Our archæological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, a founding co-editor of the peer-review *Time and Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* (www.bergpublishers.com).

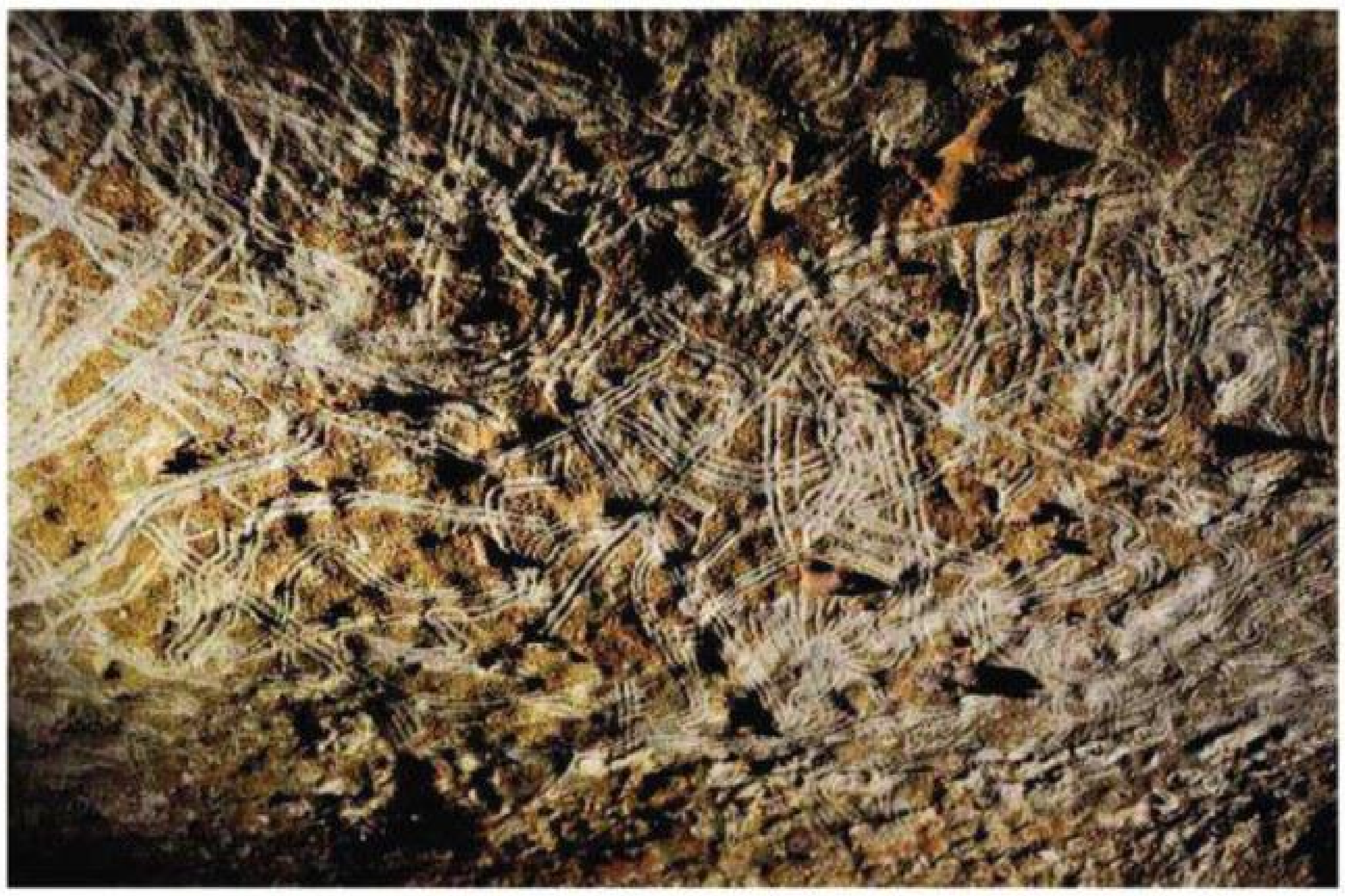
## BLUESTONE DRIVE-BY


PETE CRANE / PCNPA

Here's a Road Traffic Accident report with a difference. A bluestone monolith had stood for 4,000 years quietly minding its own business alongside the Fford Bedd Morris road near Newport, Pembrokeshire, Wales (not all that far from the source sites of the Stonehenge bluestones), when a hit-and-run driver knocked it down, leaving it sprawled helplessly on the grass verge. Local authorities have moved it to safety to avoid it being stolen. *D.Mail, 13 Oct 2011 (and thanks to Jon Wozencroft).*

### KIDS' STUFF

Organised grooves on the walls of the Cave of a Hundred Mammoths, Rouffignac, France, have been identified as "finger flutings" created by children digging and dragging their fingers over the softened surface of the rock walls. The story line is that kids 10,000 or so years ago were just like kids now who love to do finger-painting – it's just that there were no fridges and magnets to pin up the putative masterpieces, so cave walls had to suffice. Some of the markings were apparently made by children as young as three, five and seven years, so we are told. One of the most prolific child artists is thought to have been a five-year-old girl. It is not really explained in the various reports how such exact archæological identification of age and gender has been achieved. The flutings are associated with cave paintings, and occur throughout the cavern system, though they are concentrated in one particular area. Some of the markings are up to 7ft (2m) above the cave floor, so the child artist must presumably have to have been held up by an adult. Similar flutings have been noted in other prehistoric caves in Spain and even as far afield as Australasia. All very odd. *BBC News, 30 Sept 2011.*


JESSICA COONEY / LESLIE VAN GELDER

**ABOVE:** These patterns of wall painting in Cave of a Hundred Mammoths in Rouffignac, France, have been identified as the work of small children some 10,000 years ago.

The finger flutings are not pigmented, unlike some of the cave paintings. Interestingly, another recent discovery is the uncovering of painting kits over 70,000 years old in the Blombos Cave on South Africa's Southern Cape. The kits comprise bone and stone tools for grinding and applying pigments, along with the shells of giant sea snails that had been used as paint-mixing pots. Traces of red and yellow pigments have been found on some of the tools, and on at least one of the shells. One can almost hear a Stone Age parent saying to their young offspring: "One of these days, if you're good, we'll let you use *colours*." *Guardian, 13 Oct 2011.*

### WAY BACK WHEN

The dating of the first populating of the Americas gets pushed back all the time. Another big archæological news item from the USA is that the oldest confirmed site of human habitation in North America has been found at Buttermilk Creek, north-west of Austin, Texas. Found there have been stone artefacts dating back well over 15,000 years. Up until now, the official line has been that the first Indians arrived c.13,000 years ago or later; they are called the Clovis people because of distinctive flint spear points found near Clovis, New Mexico. The Buttermilk Creek investigators are expecting to find older evidence of human habitation in lower strata. This site is not the only one to provide such evidence – potentially earlier data have been found at other North and (particularly) South American sites, but the evidence at Buttermilk Creek is the most securely dated. And mark it well, it will all get much older yet. *Houston Chronicle (chron.com), 24 Mar 2011, citing a paper in Science of the same date.*

### CRAP SCIENCE

Archæologists have been analysing the largest deposit of human excrement from the ancient Roman world ever discovered – 774 sacks of it, weighting nine tons. It was taken from a 282ft (86m) tunnel in the town of Herculaneum it Italy, which was buried under volcanic ash by the eruption of Mt Vesuvius in AD 79. The tunnel was linked to chutes that flowed from the latrines and kitchens of the homes and shops above, where an estimated 150 people lived. The research has revealed a wealth of information about the ailments and diet of ordinary Romans, showing they ate lots of fish and fruit – including sea urchins, figs and olives – as well as dormice, walnuts and eggs. Project manager Jane Thompson said: "Studying this waste and linking it to the inhabitants or workers in the buildings above is allowing us to learn more about their lives, the types of food people ate and the work they did." The diet of the rich is much better documented than that of ordinary people. Other discoveries include items of pottery, a lamp, 60 coins, necklace beads and a gold ring with decorative gemstone. So far only 10 per cent of the excrement has been sifted. "We have only scratched the surface and are offering people the chance to come and help us sieve through the poo," said Ms Thompson. *BBC News, D.Telegraph, dailymail.co.uk, 15 June 2011.*

# CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 144. HERODOTEAN HAT-TRICK

Justin Marozzi's splendid *The Way of Herodotus*, 2008 (potted version, *Spectator,* 21 Nov 2009) inspires updated expansion of my previous [**FT179:16, 180:18**] inspections. Further impetus from the Herodotus-loving character in Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*, and the film thereof.

(Page references to Penguin translation; Herodotus (below) is abbreviated to H).

80–1: H's claim, often doubted, that the Etruscans were descended from Lydia (Turkish Anatolia), is vindicated by geneticists' studies of mitochondrial DNA from Tuscan residents and cattle.

214: H's previously unattested story that Persian King Cambyses's army was engulfed by a sandstorm as they picnicked in Egypt's Western Desert is allegedly confirmed by the recent excavations of Italian archæologists Alfredo and Angelo Castiglioni [**FT261:22–23**].

246–7: H's gold-digging Indian ants are explained by French anthropologist Michel Peissel as the Himalayan marmots that dwell in Pakistani Kashmir, from whose burrows the locals gather gold [**FT97:9**]; cf. ER Bevan, 'India in Early Greek & Latin Literature,' in (ed. EJ Rapson) *Ancient India* (CUP, 1922), pp396–424 for rationalisation of similar Indian stories.

275: H accepts Aristeas's poetic account of the Griffins that guarded Northern tribes' gold (a commonplace in ancient literature and art – **FT170:50–55**), a tale now explained as folklore preserving the memory of some indigenous prehistoric beast.

332: A spring at Siwa is strangely cold by day, extraordinarily hot by midnight, a claim repeated by many authors down to Augustine (*City of God*, bk21 ch5), not realising that it was the desert air that underwent such dramatic temperature changes.

Herodotus would have enjoyed the local tourist come-on that Antony and Cleopatra bathed naked in it. Likewise, the modern claim that Queen Artemisia (she built the Mausoleum) sprinkled hubbie's ashes into her wine before fucking, to have his dead body inside her.

221: Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, flung a valuable ring into the sea, only to discover it in the belly of a fish served at dinner. Fort (*Books*, p864) concedes: "It could be that once upon a time somebody did get a ring back fishwise."

Herodotus himself frequently rationalises guides' yarns. For instance, he (280-1) explained the supposed thick falls of feathers in Scythia as simply heavy snow – a winter in Canada would have reinforced this conclusion.

So far, so sober. *FT* readers' thoughts on the following are invited:

112: Athene's priestess at Pedasus thrice warned inhabitants of impending danger by growing a beard.

403: Many of the 20,000 Persian sailors wrecked at Athos were devoured by local sea monsters – perhaps ancestors of the famous modern monks.

241–2: Darius was elected King when his horse neighed at the spot it had previously mounted a mare, this portent enhanced by thunder and lightning from a clear sky.

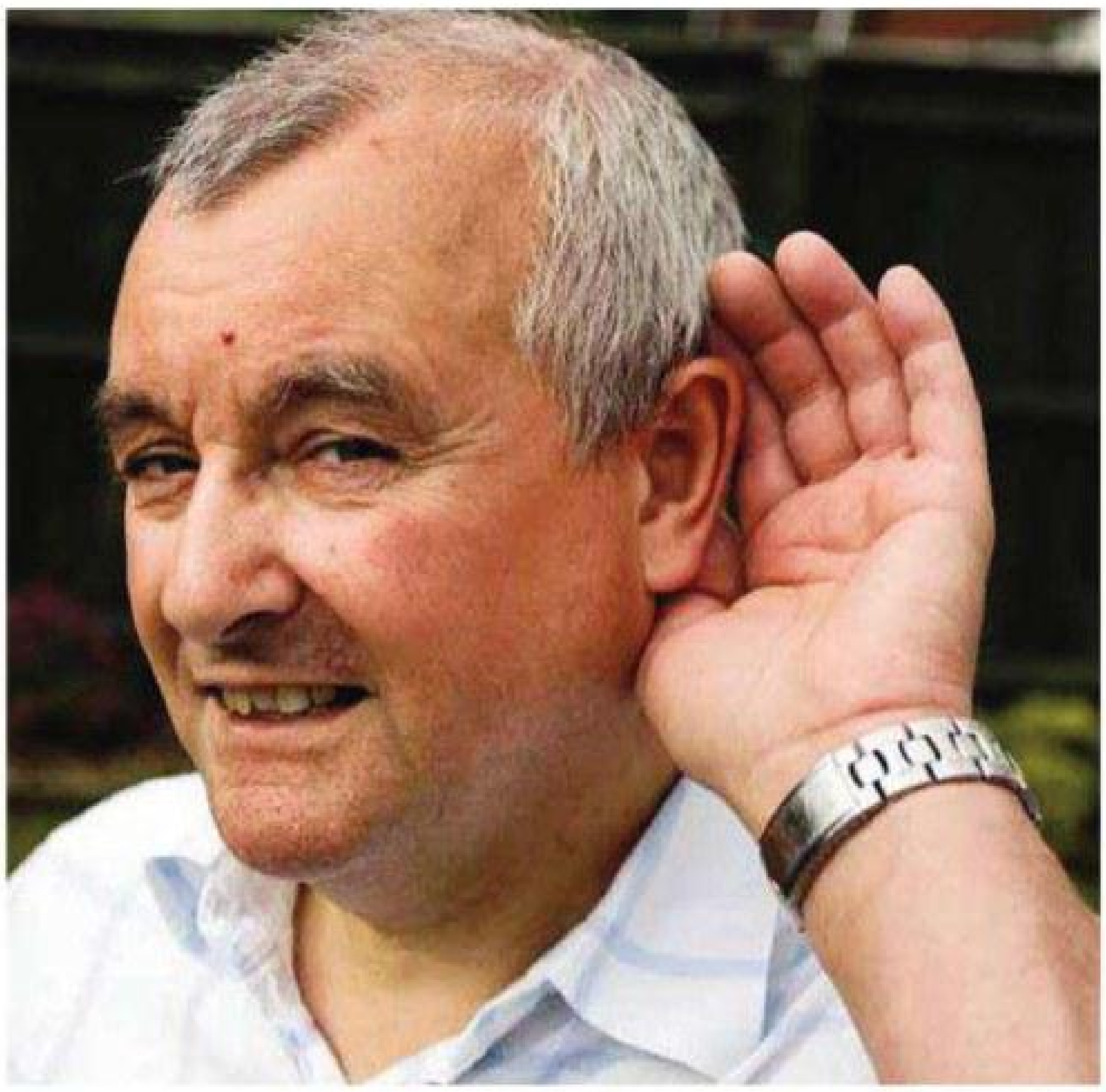
536: Coming to loot the Temple at Delphi, Xerxes's soldiers were frightened off by sacred weapons moving spontaneously, a strange cry from within the shrine, a hail of thunderbolts, and for good measure two crushingly huge boulders from Mount Parnassus.

Lots of sex in Herodotus: Nasamonian brides gang-banged before wedding (329); Babylonians fumigate their genitals after sex (121); Cheops's prostitute daughter (179) builds the second Giza pyramid from bricks, one per customer – considering its size (447 feet high, 690 square footage), she was a busy girl.

"There is a fictional coloration to everybody's account of an 'actual occurrence', and there is at least the lurk somewhere of what is called the 'actual' in everybody's yarn" – Fort, p864.

# Medical miscellany

## Hypersensitive hearing and mysterious memory losses



INS NEWS AGENCY

### NOISY EYEBALLS

Doctors were baffled when Stephen Mabbutt (right) told them that he could hear his eyeballs moving, but they eventually diagnosed a rare ear condition in which sounds inside the body are heard very loudly. Mr Mabbutt, 57, a father of two from Charlton, near Banbury, Oxfordshire, could also hear his heart beating, and when he chewed food the noise was deafening. He was experiencing autophony, one of the symptoms of superior canal dehiscence syndrome (SCDS), a rare condition discovered by American surgeon Lloyd B Minor in 1995 and thought to effect one in 500,000 people a year in Britain.

At first Mr Mabbutt noticed the internal sound of his own voice was beginning to drown out all other sounds around him. Over six years, the condition worsened as other bodily noises joined in. "I was sitting quietly alone in the house one evening and I suddenly heard this quite loud scratchy noise, like sandpaper being rubbed on wood," he said. "I was quite alarmed and looked around, wondering what it was. Then I noticed the noise came every time I moved my eyes. I started to think I was going mad... Watching Wimbledon was hell..."

"The first symptoms appeared around 2005. I found if I raised my voice I'd get a vibration in my head. If I was eating a bag of crisps, the crunching noise drowned out people speaking. Then I found I would be hearing my heartbeat. Sleep was pretty much impossible. It was like trying to drop off with a noisy workshop in my head. Towards the end, it was starting to affect my eyes as well. My vision would pulsate with the rhythm of my heart. Doctors put it down to congestion and gave me any number of sprays, drops, tests and antibiotics – it never made any difference."

This year, a CT scan revealed a tiny hole in the temporal bone in his skull. Fluid from the semicircular canals of the inner ear was seeping into his brain and conducting bodily sounds. An operation to cure the problem was carried out by Richard Irving, an expert at the Birmingham Ear Clinic. A 2in (5cm) incision was made behind the ear, making a channel though the bone to find the "balance organ", and using Mr Mabbutt's own bone to create a seal around the defect. "It's made a big difference in my life," he said. "I feel a different person all round." *Sun, telegraph.co.uk, 1 Aug; Metro, 2 Aug 2011.*

### WIPING THE SLATE CLEAN

When 32-year-old Naomi Jacobs woke up one morning in 2008, she was convinced she was 15 and it was 1992. The last thing she could recall was falling asleep in her bunk bed as a schoolgirl, dreaming about a boy she had a crush on. "I looked in the mirror and had the fright of my life when I saw a woman with wrinkles staring back at me," she said. "Then this little boy appeared and started calling me Mum. That's when I started to scream. I didn't know who he was, I didn't think he was much younger than I was, and I certainly didn't remember giving birth to him. To say I was petrified is an understatement."

Miss Jacobs, from Manchester, had transient global amnesia, a form of memory loss usually brought on by stress. She had been worrying about a homeopathy business she ran; she was studying for a psychology degree and had her final exams approaching, and had recently split up with the father of her 11-year-old son Leo. Her episodic memory had shut down, but her semantic memory was intact, which meant she could recall familiar phone numbers. She was able to ring a friend and her sister to ask for help, and they took her to a doctor. After eight weeks, her memory began gradually to return.

Now, she has published a novel based on her experience. "It has taken three years of hard work to piece most of my memory back together, and it just helps me to appreciate all I have," she said. "At 15, I thought I would have conquered half the planet by my thirties. It was a massive shock to discover I was just an ordinary, single mum and driving a battered old Fiat Brava... Although it was traumatic, I'm really grateful for being thrown forward through time now. It's made me re-evaluate my life and decide to follow my childhood dream of becoming a writer." *D.Mail, Metro, Sun, 29 July 2011.*

- The cause of Gillian Ferguson's amnesia was quite different: she lost every memory of her entire life after a freak stroke. She was at home in North Shields, near Newcastle, when it struck her in February 2007. She was rushed to North Tyneside General Hospital – and when she woke up the past was a complete blank. She couldn't recall her wedding to Neville in 1989, or the birth of her daughter Rebecca, who was 14 in 2007. Because the illness hadn't affected her physically, she was discharged after two days. "I remember coming home and thinking I really don't know what's going on," said Mrs Ferguson, now 43. "I would find a toothbrush in the bathroom cabinet but I didn't know if it was mine. It was really unsettling... I had to piece together the story of my own life like a jigsaw puzzle... Maybe one day my memory will come back. Nobody knows. But for now I look to the future and try to recreate as many memories as I can to replace the ones I don't have any more." *Sunday Mirror, 7 Aug 2011.*

- Adrian Jackson was driving at Assington near Sudbury in Suffolk on 12 February 2011 when he sufffered a stroke, causing him to crash. His VW Golf rolled over and he was thrown through the rear window. At Colchester General Hospital his spleen was removed, a chest drain inserted and his badly damaged hip and thigh pinned. He was then transferred to the Royal London Hospital's trauma unit where surgeons repaired a skull fracture. Awaking from his coma on Valentine's Day, he wondered who the attractive woman at his bedside was. It was his wife Katie, whom he had married a few months earlier. The 43-year-old mechanic thought he was 33, but patches of his memory loss extended even further back. He had no recollection of some of his family and friends, as well as vast swathes of time. The cause of his stroke remains a mystery, but doctors have said that the memory loss was caused by the head-blow in the crash. *D.Mail, 11 Aug 2011.*

# AZ ALIEN ZOO

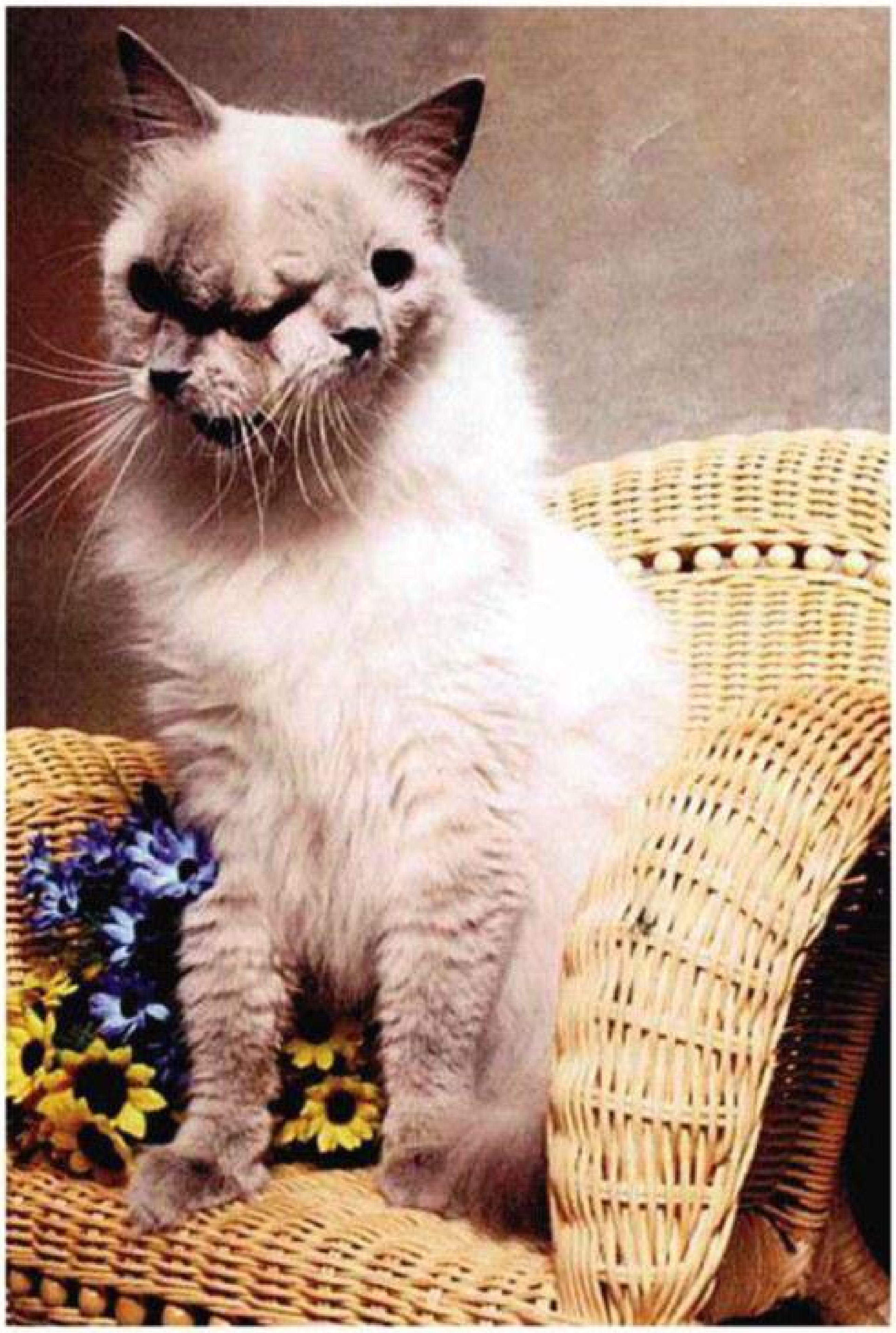
in this month's Alien Zoo, **KARL SHUKER** looks at two very different but equally exceptional cats – both, coincidentally, making news on 8 September 2011 – the likes of which have never been seen before, and may never be seen again.

## A CHEETALINE WINS THE CRYPTO-RACE

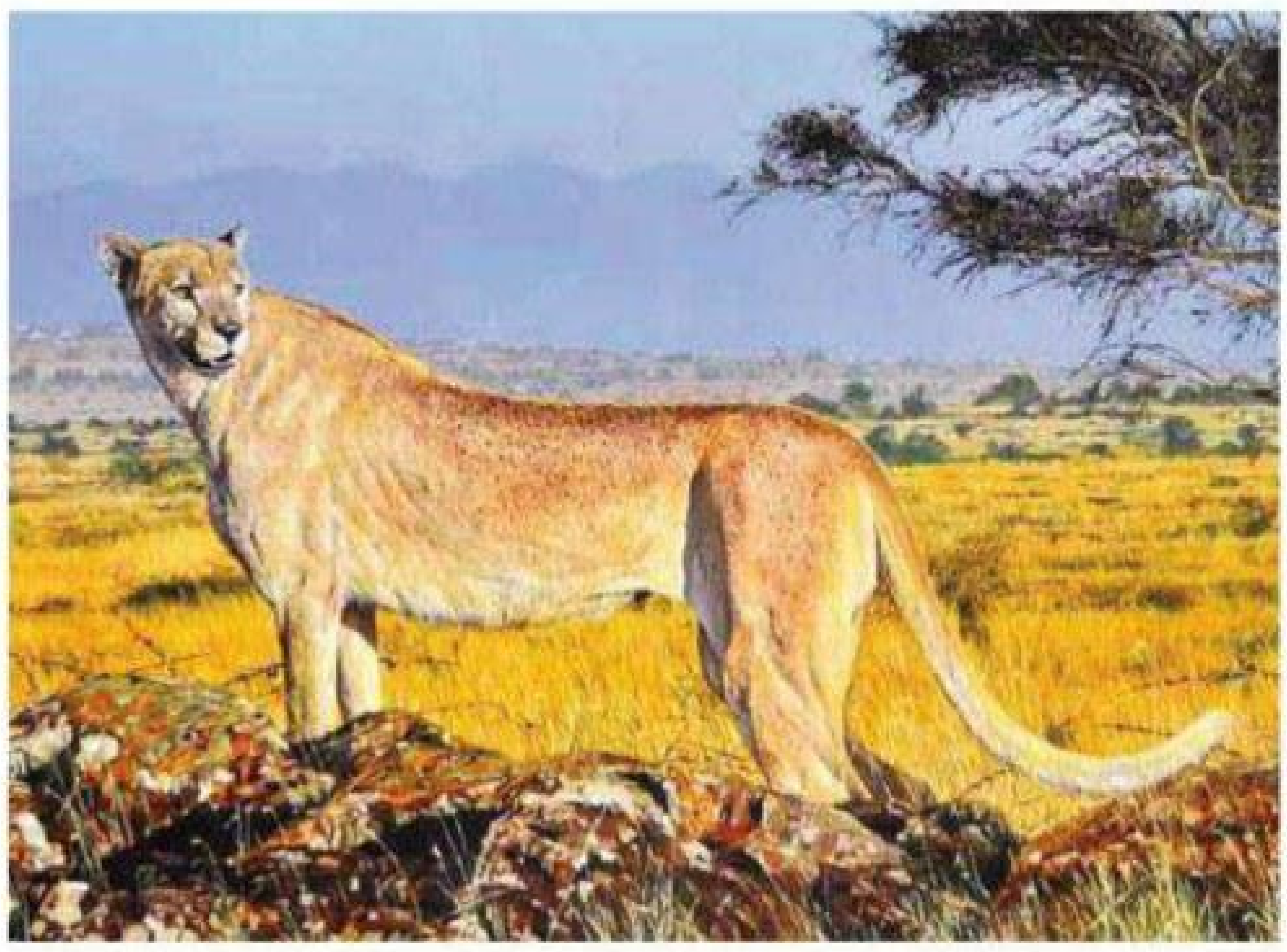
Throughout summer 2011, the science news website io9 offered a reward of US $2,000 to anyone who could submit a photograph of a genuine mystery beast. The panel of experts chosen to examine submissions included a zoologist, a Photoshop expert, and cryptozoologist Loren Coleman, so this was clearly no lighthearted jape. And, fittingly, the winning image, revealed on 8 September, was of a truly remarkable creature – a cheetah whose normal coat patterning of polkadot spots was replaced by a fine dusting of tiny speckles – so fine that, unless viewed very closely, it appeared to be unpatterned. This pale unspotted cheetah was discovered, photographed, and also painted in its native Kenya by wildlife artist Guy Combes.

It was like none other ever documented in the living state – indeed, as I noted when Mr Combes contacted me to ask my opinion, I know of only one previous comparable cheetah, a skin obtained in Tanzania back in 1921. Their fur's very pale background coloration may be due to leucism, a condition in which an animal's eyes, nose, mouth, and other extremities are normal in colour (unlike in albinos) but their fur or skin colour is diluted. As for their greatly reduced spotting, there is a notable feline precedent.

The serval *Leptailurus serval* is another African wild cat that normally has distinctive polkadot spots, but very occasionally an individual is born that, due to the expression of a certain mutant gene, has instead nothing more than an array of tiny speckles, just like these two cheetahs. As this rare serval morph is known as a servaline, I had dubbed the speckled Tanzanian cheetah of 1921 a cheetaline (**FT271:59**). Now, remarkably, 90 years later, there is a second, living cheetaline, a subadult male that has been named 'The Phantom' by Guy Combes, who plans to donate most of his prize money to his local cheetah preservation project's fund. *http://on.io9.com/pg2EyG (io9.com) 8 Sept 2011; Guy Combes, pers. comms, Sept 2011; http://bit.ly/nncBpB (guycombes.wordpress.com) 15 June 2011.*



MARTY STEVENS



GUY COMBES

## FELINE RECORD-BREAKER

On 8 September 2011, he celebrated his 12th birthday, which is quite an achievement for any cat, but for Frank and Louie it is truly extraordinary... because he is a truly extraordinary cat – a Janus cat, no less. Named after Janus, the Roman god of doorways who had two faces, and a term that I coined several years ago after discovering that no non-technical name existed for this remarkable and extremely rare teratological condition, a Janus cat is one that exhibits diprosopia – facial duplication, caused by excessive production of a specific protein called SHH. In short, Frank and Louie has one head, and one brain, but two faces, positioned side by side and slightly overlapping, so that they share a single central eye, but each face has its own outer eye, outer ear, nose, and mouth.

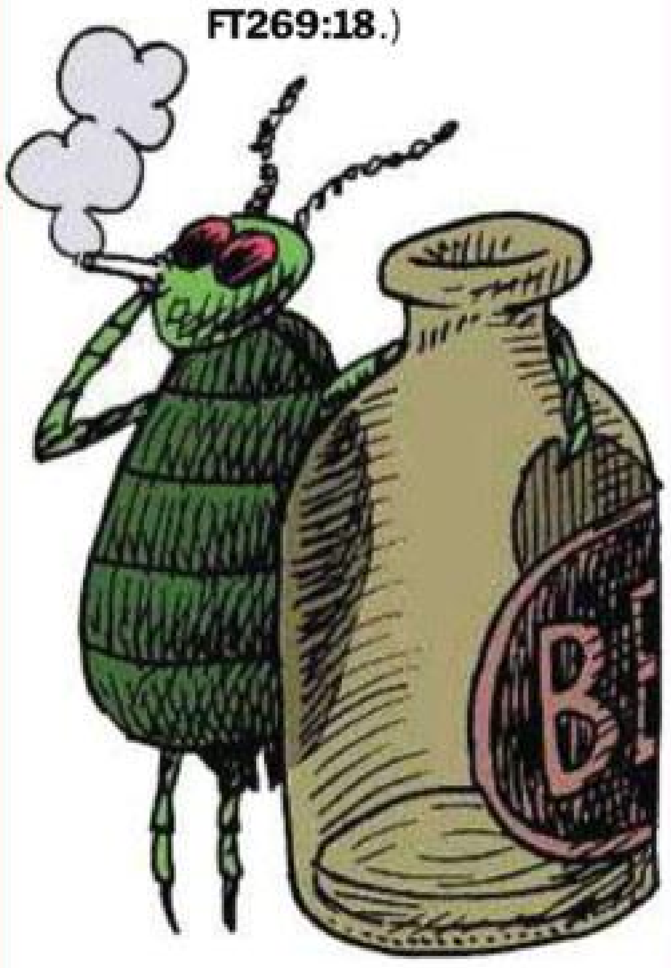
Normally, Janus kittens die before birth or shortly after, but when in September 1999 veterinary nurse Marty Stevens, now living in Massachusetts, was shown the tiny scrap of fur that was a one-day-old Frank and Louie, who had been brought in to be euthanised, she was determined to rear him. Luckily, although each face had its own mouth, only one (Frank's, the right-hand face) was attached to the single œsophagus. Louie's mouth was blind-ending, so only Frank feeds. This prevented the kitten from choking, as would probably have occurred if both mouths had ingested food at the same time, thereby overfilling the œsophagus. Whereas in dicephalic (two-headed) animals the two heads are effectively separate individuals sharing the same body, Frank and Louie as a diprosopic animal is a single entity that just so happens to have two faces. For as I learnt from Marty, the faces operate in perfect synchrony – the mouths open together, the two outer eyes blink together (the shared central one has no eyelid, so cannot blink, and needs to be kept moist with eye-drops) – indicating that the external facial duplication is mirrored internally by duplication of the facial nerves, muscles, and other tissue.

During the weeks and months that followed his rescue, Frank and Louie became stronger and bigger, until by maturity he had become very sturdy and sizeable but also an extremely docile, sweet-natured – and much-loved – pet cat. Moreover, Marty's unique success in raising and maintaining a Janus cat to such a great age has now been officially marked by Frank and Louie's appearance in the 2012 edition of *Guinness World Records* as the world's longest-surviving Janus cat. All of which just goes to show that a cat with two faces can also have nine lives if given enough love and care by a devoted owner. *Marty Stevens, pers. comms, Aug–Sept 2011; ShukerNature: http://bit.ly/nlg84R.*

# IG NOBEL AWARDS 2011

**The latest honours include beetles with bottle, a mayor driving a tank, yawning tortoises, a horseradish alarm clock, plus urine-inspired decisions**

The 21st annual Ig Nobel awards ("for achievements that first make people laugh, then make them think") were announced on 29 September. As ever, the ceremony was hosted by the journal *Annals of Improbable Research* at Harvard's Sanders Theatre, with people throwing paper planes and a little girl berating the winners. The ceremony was webcast live and the much-coveted prizes handed out by real Nobel laureates, seven of whom were in attendance this year. (For last year's awards, see **FT269:18**.)



Entomologists Darryl Gwynne and David Rentz landed the biology prize for their observation on a field expedition in Western Australia of buprestid beetles trying to copulate with discarded beer bottles, specifically brown 'stubbies' with bobbly bits on them. "It was just coincidental that my area of research was Darwinian sexual selection and how sex differences evolve, and here was a classic example taking place in front of my eyes where males were making mating errors," said Prof. Gwynne.

Arturas Zuokas, the mayor of Vilnius, Lithuania, won the peace prize for demonstrating that the problem of illegally parked luxury cars can be solved by running them over with an armoured tank.

A Europe-wide group of scientists won the physiology prize for their paper in *Current Zoology* entitled: "No Evidence Of Contagious Yawning in the Red-Footed Tortoise *Geochelone carbonaria*". (Dr Anna Wilkinson of the University of Lincoln had spent six months training a red-footed tortoise called Alexandra to yawn on command, and then used the tortoise to see whether other tortoises would yawn whenever Alexandra did. They didn't.)

The literature prize went to John Perry of Stanford University for his Theory of Structured Procrastination, which states: To be a high achiever, always work on something important, using it as a way to avoid doing something that's even more important.

An inventive Japanese team carried off the chemistry prize for working out the ideal density of airborne wasabi (pungent horseradish) to awaken sleeping people in case of a fire or other emergency, and for applying this knowledge to invent the wasabi alarm (patent pending).

The physics award went to a group of French and Dutch researchers for determining why discus throwers become dizzy while hammer throwers don't.

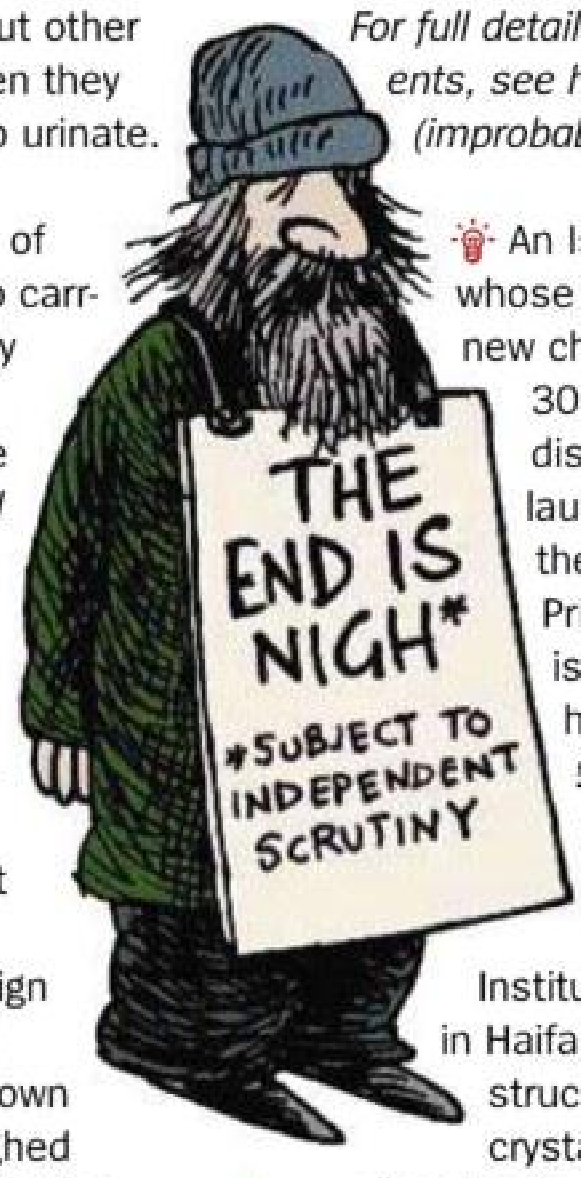
The medicine prize went to two groups of scientists from the US, Australia, Belgium and the Netherlands whose independent research jointly established that people make better decisions about some kinds of things – but worse decisions about other kinds of things – when they have a strong urge to urinate.

Karl Halvor Teigen of the University of Oslo carried off the psychology prize for his groundbreaking paper in the *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, "Is a Sigh 'Just a Sigh'? Sighs as Emotional Signals and Responses to a Difficult Task". Teigen's team discovered that most people believe others' sighs are a sign of sadness or disappointment, but their own feeling when they sighed was more often resignation.

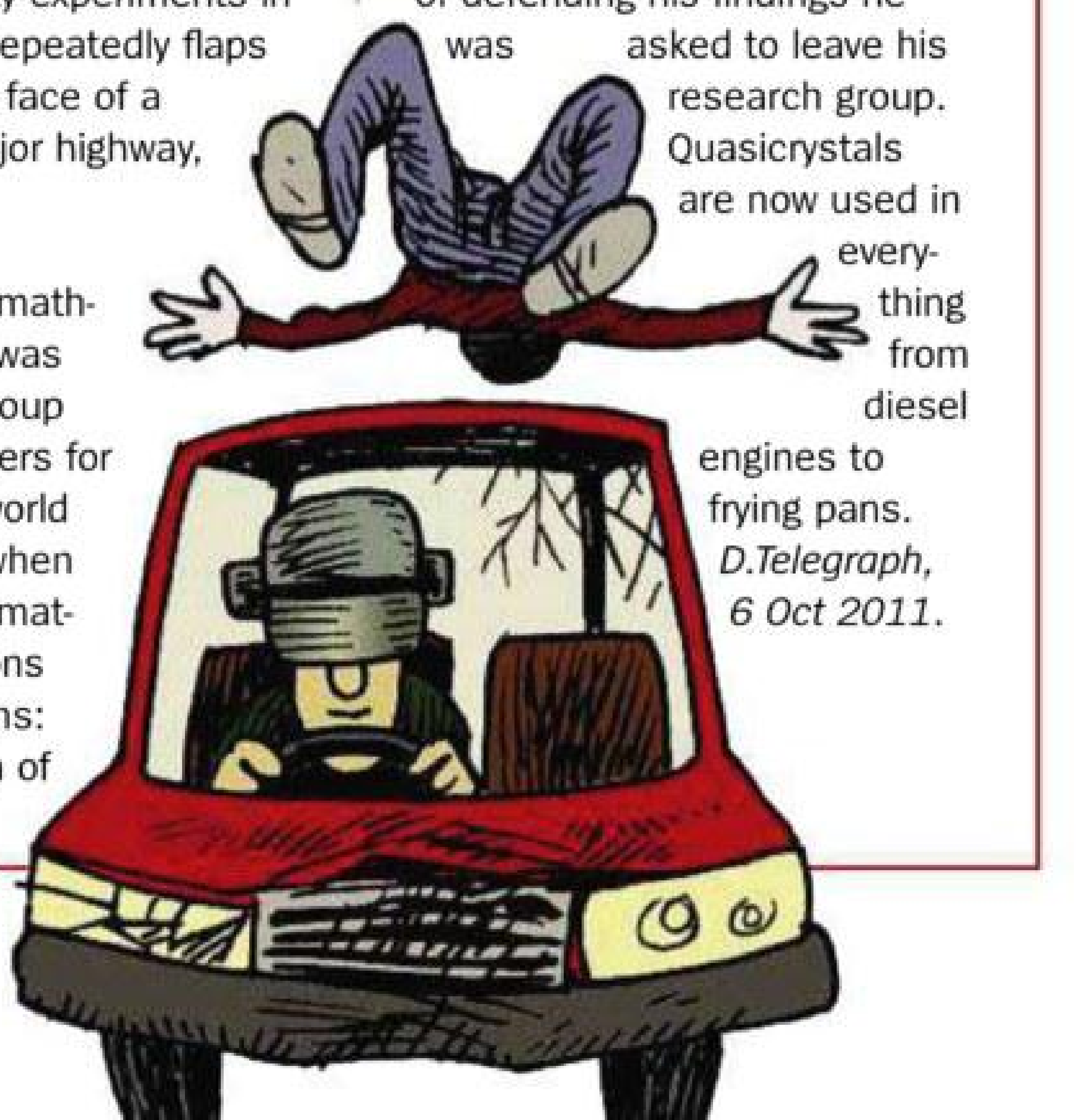
The public safety award went to John Senders of the University of Toronto for conducting a series of safety experiments in which a visor repeatedly flaps down over the face of a driver on a major highway, blinding him.

Finally, the mathematics prize was shared by a group of doom-mongers for teaching the world to be careful when making mathematical assumptions and calculations: Dorothy Martin of the US, who predicted the world would end in 1954 (**FT129:35**); Pat Robertson of the US, who predicted it would end in 1982; Elizabeth Clare Prophet of the US (1990); Lee Jang Rim [or Lim] of Korea (1992 – **FT65:7, 66:7**); Credonia Mwerinde of Uganda (1999 – **FT135:34–37**); and Harold Camping of the US (6 Sept 1994 and 21 Oct 2011 – **FT269:11, 274:55, 277:26**). For more global deadlines over recent centuries, see **FT129:34–36**. *Guardian, 30 Sept 2011.*

*For full details of award recipients, see http://bit.ly/1aCiBl (improbable.com).*

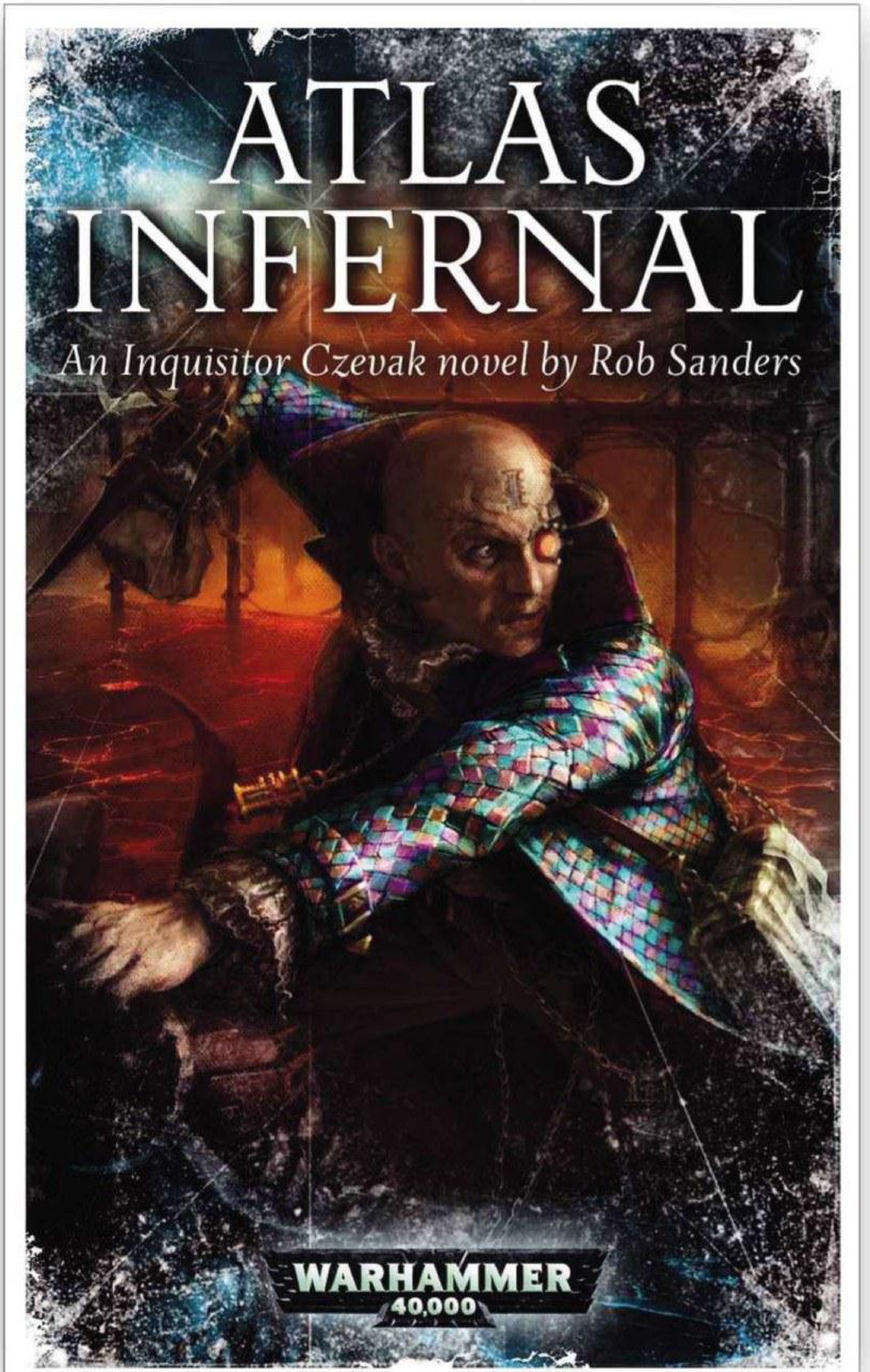


An Israeli scientist whose discovery of a new chemical structure 30 years ago was dismissed as laughable has won the (real) Nobel Prize for Chemistry, for which he will receive £940,000. Prof. Daniel Shechtman. 70, of the Technion Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa discovered the structure of quasicrystals in 1982 when he found that atoms in crystals could be packed in a pattern that did not repeat itself. His research was initially dismissed, and in the course of defending his findings he was asked to leave his research group. Quasicrystals are now used in everything from diesel engines to frying pans. *D.Telegraph, 6 Oct 2011.*



ILLUSTRATIONS: MARTIN ROSS

Everything you have been told is a lie...


ATLAS INFERNAL
An Inquisitor Czevak novel by Rob Sanders
WARHAMMER
40,000

Order from

BLACKLIBRARY.COM

**Also available from GAMES WORKSHOP and all good book stores**

# CAT NAV

**Feline journeys – from Colorado to New York, from Uzbekistan to Russia, two miles through a sewer system, across Australia's Bass Strait – how do they do it?**

**ABOVE:** Willow after being reunited with the Squires family in Boulder, Colorado.

..EX FEATURES / KEYSTONEUSA-ZUMA

Willow, a tortoishell cat from Boulder, Colorado, was lost sometime between late 2006 and early 2007, when her owners, the Squires family, were having work completed on their house. Jamie Squires, 37, thinks that the builders left a door open. They had always kept Willow inside, as mountain lions, bears and coyotes are common in the region. "We put out the 'lost cat' posters and the Craiglist thing," said Ms Squires. "We actually thought she'd been eaten by coyotes."

On 14 September 2011, a man found Willow on East 20th Street, New York City, and took her to Animal Care & Control, who scanned her microchip to find her home in Colorado. The cat was in "good condition, clean, a little chunky," said Richard Gentles, a spokesman for the shelter. "Someone was taking care of her." If she had walked the 1,800 miles (2,900km) from Boulder, she would probably have followed Interstate 80, passing out of the Rocky Mountains into the flat expanses of Nebraska and Iowa, enduring the sprawling suburbs of Illinois and Indiana, skirting the tips of the Great Lakes and passing over the Appalachian Mountains into New Jersey. "The kids can't wait to see her," said Ms Squires. "We still have her little Christmas stocking."

It should be pointed out that an anonymous person told the website Gothamist that Willow had been scooped up by a New Yorker on a ski vacation and flown back to his or her home in Brooklyn. After years with the cat, the new owner chose to turn the pet into the shelter because he/she travelled a great deal and was "unable to give her all the time and attention she deserves." According to this account, greeted with scepticism by city officials, a Colorado vet had turned up no record of her original owners and didn't scan her for her implanted microchip. *[AP] Times, 16 Sept; NY Post, 17 Sept 2011.*

• A cat reportedly trekked 2,000 miles (3,200km) to find his owners after they moved house without him. Ravila Hairova, 52, thought her grey cat Karim would find the change too upsetting so she asked neighbours in Gulistan, Uzbekistan, to take him in. Two years later, she found her bedraggled, starving pet waiting on her doorstep at her new home in Liska, Russia. "I knew he had disappeared from my neighbours' home a few days after we left, which was very sad," she said. "Then I was walking along the road and I saw this cat which seemed to be waiting for me. When I got closer I saw it was Karim – thin, and in very poor condition but it was him. He is very happy now and so are we." Ravila's husband Lev Kondratyev, 46, said: "There are certain marks on his body including a scar on his tail when it was caught in the door that show us he is 100 per cent our Karim – and he obviously recognised us as well." *http://web.orange.co.uk, 24 June 2010.*

NEW YORK
NEW YORK
BROOMFIELD
COLORADO

**"We actually thought she'd been eaten by coyotes"**

This falls into the most puzzling category of domestic animal odysseys, when pets find their way to their original owners who in the interim *have moved to an address that the pet has never visited*. For further examples of this, see **FT61:46–49, 158:22.**

• A black cat called Midnight disappeared from her home in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, on 1 March 2011 after her sister, Star, was run over. She somehow got lost in a storm drain and took 10 days to find her way home by navigating two miles (3.2km) of sewers. Owner Jeanette Young, 39, had given up hope of finding her when a neighbour five doors away heard faint meows from a manhole cover outside her home and called water company Severn Trent, which dispatched two workmen to rescue the bedraggled animal, filthy but unhurt. They said the nearest place the cat could have entered the sewer system was a storm drain by a small stream two miles away. Local vets found Midnight's microchip and called Ms Young, a mother of two. "It is absolutely amazing," she said. "How on earth did she find her way back home underground? She was just a few steps away from our front door so she did a brilliant job of navigating." *dailymail.co.uk, 18 Mar 2011.*

• Natasha Johns was frantic when her one-year-old cat Charlie disappeared from Tywardreath in Cornwall in mid- February, and couldn't believe it when she received a call four months later saying her missing pet had turned up in North Wales, 403 miles (649km) away. RSPCA inspector Mike Pugh found Charlie on 19 May in Llanfaethlu, Holyhead, Anglesey. Her collar had become embedded in her neck. "I managed to coax her out with some food as she was starving," said Mr Pugh. "As soon as the collar came off, she responded instantly and was like a different cat. Clearly, she had been in a lot of pain and was really frightened." After she was treated by a vet, her owners were traced from a telephone number and postcode in a barrel on her collar. Ms Johns and her partner Ross Saundry had spent months putting up flyers and knocking on doors in their search before giving up hope of finding their "nosy" family pet, a gift for their two-year-old daughter Roxanne. They were reunited with Charlie in Bristol. *BBC News, 2 June; Daily Post, 3 June 2011.*

• Clyde, a pure-bred long-haired Himalayan cat, disappeared from his home in Magra, about 20 miles (32km) northwest of Hobart in Tasmania, sometime in 2006. Almost three years later, in May 2009, he wandered into a hospital in Cloncarry, a mining town in the heart of Queensland, about 2,400 miles (3,800km) away. He was adopted by a nurse, but four months later she was offered a transfer and took the cat to a vet, who identified him by microchip. Clyde's owner, Katrina Phillips, was astonished and delighted to hear he had been found. He was flown home on 15 September 2009. *(Adelaide) Sunday Mail, 13 Sept; ABC News, 15 Sept; Queensland Times, 17 Sept 2009.*

• Sidney, a 12-year-old cat, vanished from home in Guildford, Surrey, in 2008, and turned up 18 months later and 200 miles (320km) away in Holsworthy, Devon. "He was a walking skeleton and I don't think he would have survived much longer," said Lindsay Young, who identified him from his microchip. *D.Mirror, 4 June 2010.*

• A cat called Sampson went missing from his home in Penicuik, Midlothian, in 2008. On 13 September 2009, more than a year later, his owner Linda Jansen received a call from a vet in Plymouth, Devon – 478 miles (770km) away – to say her pet had been handed in and identified by microchip. Edinburgh-based Eagle Couriers offered to return the cat for free. *BBC News, 15 Sept 2009.*

• An 18-month-old tomcat called Timmy disappeared from his home in Brisbane, Queensland, in August 2009, and a year later turned up in Townsville, 800 miles (1,300km) to the north, and was traced by microchip. Owner Kamala Brooks planned to have him flown home. *Queensland Times, 31 July 2010.*

• Geoffrey, a 15-month-old pedigree Bengal cat vanished from home in Shanklin, Isle of Wight, on 13 September 2009. Three weeks later he turned up in Aislaby, North Yorkshire, 326 miles (525km) to the north, "wobbly and thin". Owners Tim and Cindy Whitbread made the 15-hour return drive and ferry crossing to pick him up. *Whitby Gazette, 2+9 Oct; Yorkshire Post, 3 Oct 2009.*

• A month later, another cat vanished from the Isle of Wight and somehow made it to Yorkshire. Harriet Parkinson, 31, rescued a kitten from the Cats Protection Centre on the Isle of Wight as a pet for her two small children. They named him Star, but in October 2009, at the age of nine months, he went missing from his home in Ryde. After a fruitless leaflet campaign, the family gave up hope of seeing him again. However, 15 months later, on 10 January 2011, Star was handed in to a rescue centre in York after a 278-mile (447km) trip across land and sea. His owners were traced by microchip, and Ms Parkinson drove up to York to bring him home. *(Isle of Wight) County Press, 21 Jan; D.Telegraph, 22 Jan 2011.*

• A cat called Charles disappeared from home in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and eight months later turned up in Chicago, 1,300 miles (2,000km) away. He was healthy, but needed a good brushing. *telegraph.co.uk, 18 April 2010.*

• A seven-year-old tomcat was found near a canal in Cosgrove, Northamptonshire, in December 2010. A microchip was registered to an address in Normandy, 250 miles (400km) away, but nobody claimed the animal. It was suggested he might have boarded a cross-Channel train bound for a freight terminal in Crick, Northamptonshire. *D.Telegraph, Sun, 17 Dec 2010.*

*For the last round-up of cat journeys, see* **FT199:14–15**.

# KONSPIRACY KORNER

**ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER MAGAZINE, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...**

## GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT AND SPYING TECHNIQUES

The early conspiracy theories in Europe arose in the 19th century, before the state as we know it existed, and the objects of the theories were non-state actors: the Jews and secret societies, notably the Masons. With the modern state came conspiracy theories about what the state might do to us. And given that states, both totalitarian and democratic, have been willing to do almost *anything* to their citizens, deciding what is and is not 'paranoia' is tricky.

Recently, one item on what we might call the paranoids' agenda took a step towards legitimisation with the publication of extracts from Luke Harding's account of his time as *Guardian* correspondent in Russia. Harding describes how persons unknown, but presumably the Russian security agency, the FSB, repeatedly entered his flat and slightly rearranged its contents – to let him know they had been there.[1]

But would Harding have been believed had he claimed this was happening in London? *We* don't do that sort of thing, do we? Such activities are very difficult to substantiate and easy to dismiss as paranoia. A woman I met, who claimed she was being harassed in this way by Mossad after having an affair with an Israeli politician, went to great lengths with locks, microphones and video cameras. She succeeded neither in keeping her intruders out nor obtaining the evidence she needed of their presence. Was she deluded? I would have said not, but she had nothing you could call evidence to back up her story.

Roderick Russell, who has written extensively about the harassment of himself and his family at the hands of private agents working for an international property company, calls this behaviour by security agents *Zerzetsen* – the name given to it by the East German Stasi, who developed the technique to harass dissidents.[2]

A Canadian intelligence official, Gareth Llwellyn, suspected of being an American spy, describes how in his *Zerzetsen* he was gang-stalked – followed around by 'teams of louts', in his words. Gang-stalking – being followed all the time – is another claim which sounds almost classically paranoid. Yet Llwellyn's documentation looks pretty solid to me; and some of the gang-stalking videos on YouTube seem to show *something*.[3]

Given the post-WW2 history of forced psychiatry in the Soviet Union and brain experiments in the West, notably by the CIA, one of the items on the paranoids' agenda is fear of the state interfering with one's brain. In the 1980s, a Swede, Robert Naeslund, circulated X-rays of his head apparently showing objects in his brain and photographs of the object – some kind of electronic receiver/transmitter – being removed. Naeslund accused the Swedish secret police, SAPO, of being responsible. His claims were never taken seriously, let alone investigated, in Sweden.[4]

Brain implants are featured in the 2004 remake of *The Manchurian Candidate*. In a feature about the film, *USA Today* quoted Steven Hassan of the Freedom of Mind Resource Center in Somerville, Massachusetts: "I have 30 years of doing work in this area, and I have repeatedly met people who claim aliens or the CIA implanted mind-control chips in them. I have yet to see those chips show up in brain scans."[5]

Hassan's long wait for evidence of such implants might be over. At http://bit.ly/qapPog (chroniclesofamindcontroltarget.blogspot.com) are MRI scans apparently showing implants in the brain of the British citizen Kieron Perrin...

**NOTES**

**1** http://bit.ly/n2lgbf (*Guardian*).

**2** Russell's story is at http://scr.bi/9fhyqc (scribd.com) and http://bit.ly/aMqo5E (zerzetzen.wikispaces.com).

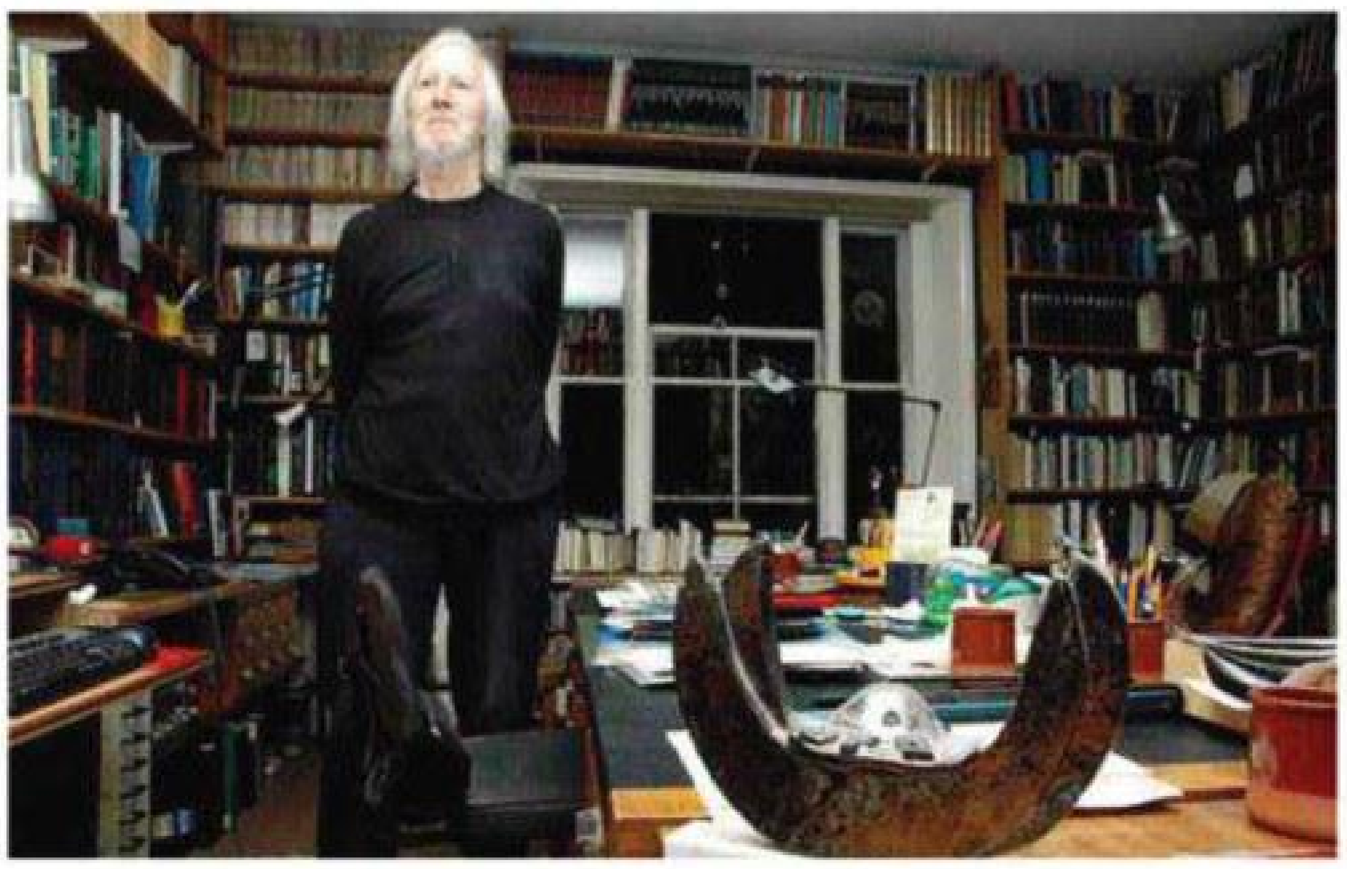
**3** Llwellyn's story is discussed at http://bit.ly/q1oGxP (lobster-magazine.co.uk).

**4** http://bit.ly/4rq8OL (bibliotecapleyades.net).

**5** http://usat.ly/p8FN3y (usatoday.com).

# NECROLOG

**We note the passing of two figures whose widely differing interpretations of the UFO phenomenon proved a major influence on the field in their respective countries.**



CLAS SVAHN

## HILARY EVANS

In five decades as a professional writer, Hilary Evans published more than 30 books on art, illustration, picture librarianship, social history, and anomalous phenomena. He was described by those who knew him and worked with him as a gentleman in demeanour and scholarship, who readily helped budding writers, earnest groups and fledgling magazines (including *FT*). He wore two hats: he was the acquisitions director for the Mary Evans Picture Library (MEPL), which he and his wife Mary built into a world-class collection of period illustrations; and he was a hugely influential writer on paranormal and ufological topics. John Spencer, with whom Evans edited two books, said Hilary was "an academic who brought quality thinking and objectivity to the subject [of UFOs]. His books were among the first to publicize alternative theories to the ETH (Extraterrestrial Hypothesis) and drew [on sources] which were ground-breaking at the time."

Hilary was born in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, the son of a vicar who moved the family to India. In 1938, aged nine, he was sent back to Britain to attend St George's School in Harpenden, Hertfordshire. For his National Service, at the age of 18, he served as a constable with the Palestine Police (1947–1948), going on to gain a BA in English at King's College, Cambridge. After he gained a master's degree at Birmingham University, he became a private tutor to a wealthy Turkish family before becoming a copywriter in 1953, staying with the advertising agency for 12 years. In 1956, he married Mary Lander (obituary **FT270:28**), with whom he shared a passion for old books, pictures and ephemera.

Their collections soon swamped their small London flat, so they moved to a house in Blackheath. By 1964, they had so much illustrated material that, when a friend suggested they should turn their hobby into a business, they saw the sense of it and founded the MEPL, which they built into one of the world's leading sources of historical imagery.

During his student days, Hilary developed an interest in the paranormal and in the late 1960s he joined the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), serving on their council in the mid-1970s. He was also a contributing member of the British UFO Research Association (BUFORA) and the Folklore Society, and instrumental in the founding of the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP) in 1981. Professionally, Hilary and Mary were founding members, in 1975, of both the British Association of Picture Libraries and Agencies (the industry's trade organisation), and the Picture Research Association (an organisation for professional picture researchers and editors).

Hilary's writing covered a remarkable range. Besides several novels, numerous books on Victorian social history, countless articles, letters and reviews, he contributed to the Orbis partwork *The Unexplained* (1980–1983), and was a consulting editor/contributor to the *Readers' Digest* volume *From Other Worlds: Aliens, Abductions, and UFOs* (1998). With his wife Mary he wrote a number of books, including *Sources of illustration 1500–1900* (1971) and *The Picture Researcher's Handbook* (1986), now in its 8th edition.

Chief among his books on anomalies are: *UFOs: The Greatest Mystery* (1979); *Intrusions: Society and the Paranormal* (1982); *The Evidence for UFOs: Physical, Photographic, Visual* (1983); *UFOs 1947–1987: The 40-Year Search for an Explanation* (1987) and *Phenomenon: From Flying Saucers to UFOs* (1988), both with John Spencer; *Frontiers of Reality: Where Science Meets the Paranormal* (1989); *The Fortean Times Book of UFOs, 1947–97* (1997) with Dennis Stacy; *From Other Worlds* (1998); *A Field Guide to Ghosts and Other Apparitions* (2000); *Seeing Ghosts* (2002); *Panic Attacks: Media Manipulation and Mass Delusion* (2004) and *Outbreak!: An Encyclopedia of Extraordinary Social Behaviour* (2009), both with Robert Bartholomew.

Hilary's work had a profound impact on British ufology when he became the 'philosophical midwife' to the birth in the UK of the 'psychosocial hypothesis' – the view of UFO-related phenomena that places the witness at the centre of the experience, instead of some unknowable alien entity. "In the early 1980s," explains *Magonia* editor John Rimmer, "a number of British ufologists were stumbling towards some sort of theory to encompass these ideas." Between 1981 and 1984, Hilary organised a series of four annual Anglo-French conferences held on alternate sides of the Channel. "At this time, thanks to writers and researchers such as Thierry Pinvidic, Bertrand Méheust, and Claude Maugé, French ufology offered a more progressive viewpoint than the British or American varieties. It was due to Hilary's connections with French ufologists, and his familiarity with the French literature, that he was able to alert British ufologists to the progress that was being made across the Channel," Rimmer recalls. "It was at the inaugural meeting in Boulogne that I first heard – from, I think, Thierry Pinvidic – the actual phrase 'psychosocial hypothesis'."

Hilary will also be remembered for his influence through his careful and detailed writing, which often presented his translations of rare accounts from French sources. His book *Seeing Ghosts* has been recommended by researchers as "one of the best" introductions to the subject. His meticulous study of the visionary nature of 'close encounter' experiences is set out in two books – *Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors* and *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians* – which clearly demonstrated that elements of mediæval demonology, shamanic and religious visions, fairy encounters, 19th-century spiritualism and 20th-century UFO encounters were all part of a continuous spectrum of experiential phenomena. In these books, Hilary developed the idea that many 'paranormal' experiences were the manifestation of percipients' own memories and states of mind, rather than 'alien' entities – and that these states were amenable to further study.

Hilary's popular work was underpinned by more academic studies such as *Intrusions: Society and the Paranormal*, and *Outbreak!*, an encyclopædic study of more than 300 cases of collective hysteria, which attracted praise from psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, and folklorists. His last book was *SLIders* – his term for people who allegedly experience streetlight interference (SLI), believing that they somehow turn off streetlights as they pass by them.

Hilary had a remarkable talent for finding pictures, and one of his delights was to wander in the flea-markets and second-hand book shops of Europe's great cities, snapping up old illustrated volumes. For example, thanks to this strategy, MEPL has one of the finest collections of the Italian weekly newspaper *Domenica del Corriere* (1899–1989), famous for its coloured front page engravings of terrible plane crashes, attacks by wolves, aviators fighting off eagles, riots and assassinations: indeed, anything wonderful. As

FOR MORE STRANGE DEATHS GO TO:
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/strangedeaths

MEPL grew, it acquired other important collections, including the famous Harry Price Collection documenting early spiritualism and investigations of poltergeists.

A move to bigger premises came in 1989, when the library took up residence in a charming converted parish hall, in Blackheath's Tranquil Vale and the family acquired a handsome Victorian villa in Lewisham. Clas Svahn, founder of the Swedish group, Archives fur Ufologie (AFU), remembers his first sight of the Evanses' treasure trove: "It was Hilary's personal library that made us gasp. In a house with four floors and a spacious attic, most of the walls were covered with bookshelves. Even two of the bathrooms contained shelves filled with literature. In the three rooms that made up Hilary's study in the gables, a ufologist or fortean could find anything he could imagine. Thousands of titles about visions, apparitions, ghosts, UFOs, archæo-astronomy, parapsychology, magic, out-of-body experiences, Atlantis, fairies, folklore..."

Over the last decade, as his health declined, and reading and writing became more difficult, Hilary arranged for the bulk of his collection to be moved for safekeeping to the AFU. Clas Svahn and other AFU colleagues made eight trips in 12 years, returning to Sweden each time with another batch of books and periodicals to catalogue and store. "Late last autumn [2010], he mailed me and said: 'If you can be here before December you can have it all for AFU'. A couple of weeks later, we met in London, at a time when he was still in hospital. Before December, a lorry carrying 5.5 tons of books was heading for our archive in Sweden. His lifetime's collection is now safe in a dedicated 'Hilary Evans Room' and available to researchers. Even after his death, Hilary will continue to offer us help and inspiration."

Sadly, from around 2006, Mary developed Alzheimer's, which progressed until she died peacefully in her sleep on the morning of 29 June 2010. The loss of his close companion of so many years weighed heavily on Hilary, whose health also suffered. His last 10 months were spent in and out of hospitals. At his death, he was at a local community hospital being treated for a kidney problem, from which he was recuperating, but contracted a chest infection." Hilary is survived by his daughter Valentine, who now runs the great picture library.

*Hilary Agard Evans, picture librarian, collector, author and anomalist; born in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, 6 March 1929; died in London 27 July 2011, aged 82.*

**Bob Rickard**

# Strange deaths

## UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

**A MAN WHO ATE HIS HUNTING PARTNER'S DOG after it was killed in a monkey attack was shot dead with a crossbow by the dog's furious owner. The two men were friends who regularly went hunting in Kratie's Snuol district [*sic*] in rural Cambodia. They apparently fell out when the victim would not help save the man's beloved dog from being killed by a vicious monkey. Tempers rose even more when the victim took the dead dog home to eat. The man confessed to the crossbow killing following his arrest. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 18 Aug 2011.***

TERRY COLON

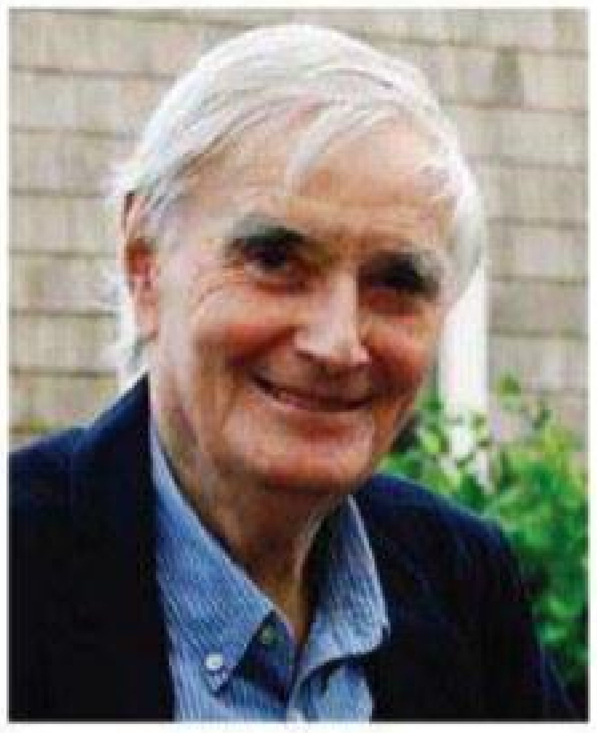
ON 15 MARCH 2011, a tree surgeon working on behalf of the Royal Parks visited West Island, a tree-covered piece of land at the end of St James's Park nearest to Buckingham Palace, usually inhabited only by wildfowl. After clearing away some leaves, he uncovered a clothed skeleton next to some vodka bottles and a decayed yellow cushion. One of the bottles was tied to the clothes with string. The bones turned out to belong to Robert James Moore, a 69-year-old American; a pathologist estimated that they had been there for about three years. Moore had sent hundreds of "strange and offensive" packages to the Queen over a period of 15 years, including obscene photographs. Some of the "peculiar" letters ran to 600 pages, and he had also posted a copy of his passport and boxes falsely warning that they contained dangerous substances.

It is thought that the royal family was unaware of his obsession, as all their mail is screened. In 2007, Moore arrived in Britain from the US, where he had been in trouble with the police for drink-driving. The only way to reach West Island is by wading or swimming across the shallow lake. Moore could have camped out there for weeks or even months. Several forms of ID were found in his pockets, including a US passport that matched the copy once sent to the Queen. At the inquest in Westminster in late September, Dr Fiona Wilcox, the coroner, commented on the "excellent, unimpeded view of the palace" from the island and recorded a verdict of "unascertained" cause of death. No next-of-kin have been located and he was not on any missing persons list.

The details of Moore's life drew comparisons with the famous case of a Frenchwoman who thought George V was sending her signals by moving the curtains in Buckingham Palace. As *Daily Telegraph* columnist Christopher Howse pointed out, St James's Park historically is just the place for a hermit. When it was being re-designed in the early 18th century, William Kent constructed for Queen Caroline a hermitage called Merlin's Cave. This rum cross between a grass-roofed African hut and a gothic ruin was installed in the gardens of Richmond Lodge. The Queen then appointed Stephen Duck, "The Thresher Poet", as her ornamental hermit. "Ornamental hermits were quite the thing in the Age of Reason," commented Howse. "No grotto was complete without one." *(London) Eve. Standard, 3 Oct; D.Telegraph, 3+4 Oct; dailymail.co.uk, 4 Oct 2011.*

**BRIAN DEPLEDGE, 38, ASPHYXIATED WHEN HE became trapped in the rungs of a clotheshorse at his home in Bradford on 1 February. The father-of-two seems to have tripped over a stool and fallen backwards onto the dryer, trapping his neck and chest between its rungs as it collapsed. His efforts to free himself created a "cat's cradle" effect, which only made the compression worse. The clothes at the top of the dryer were still wet, which increased the pressure on his neck. Recording a verdict of accidental death, coroner Paul Marks said the incident was "probably rarer than being struck by lightning or a meteorite". *D.Mirror, Times, 10 Sept 2011.***

## NECROLOG



### BUDD HOPKINS

Budd Hopkins had two careers, first as a distinguished abstract-expressionist artist, and second as a tireless investigator and advocate of 'alien abductions'. He was born in 1931 in Wheeling, West Virginia, where his father ran a Dodge and Plymouth car dealership. Hopkins contracted polio as a two-year-old; he ascribed his passion for drawing and model-making and the development of a rich fantasy life to the isolation, and consequent shyness, of those early years. He spent the war years – while his father served as a colonel on the staff of the US Second Army – playing war games with a vast armada of toys, "and from my controlling position as grand puppeteer, I knew everything that was fated to take place."

Hopkins was schooled mainly at the Linsly Military Institute in Wheeling and then spent a year at Lawrenceville, an élite all-male boarding school – an experience he loathed. He then attended Oberlin College, Ohio. His father was under the misguided impression it ran business courses; but at a friend's suggestion Hopkins tried out an art history course and, as he later put it, in the space of an hour "Art for me had grown a capital 'A'... it was as if I'd suddenly fallen in love with someone I'd known casually all my life." A series of seminars in Spring 1952 by the artist Robert Motherwell inspired Hopkins with the ambition to become an abstract expressionist painter himself.

To that end, he moved to New York City after graduating; for several years he supported himself with part-time jobs and, by way of the Cedar Tavern, got to meet most of the luminaries of the Ab-Ex movement and to an extent partake in their riotous way of life – all the while developing his talent. He described his early technique thus: "I started each work with a series of spontaneous, 'automatic' gestures which I then studied and responded to with still more semi-undirected marks, until the forming shaping impulses took over and began to establish order from the 'chaos' of the field." His later work was more premeditated – hard-edged and geometrical. By the end of the 1950s, Hopkins had also become an *habitué* of the Cape Cod artists' colony (he later built a summer house there), married his first wife Joan Rich, and had two well-received one-man shows, as well as selling to private collectors.

Over the next two decades Hopkins consolidated his reputation, won prizes and grants, and had pieces bought for the permanent collections of New York's Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Washington's Corcoran Gallery, among others. He was making a not uncomfortable living from work that was, in this writer's opinion, if not first-order, certainly striking and original. By the beginning of the 1980s, however, his interests had bifurcated. In 1964, Hopkins and a number of friends had seen an unidentified flying object while at Cape Cod. Like many others, he made an intuitive leap to the idea that this UFO was "some kind of probe from elsewhere". By 1975, when he began investigating George O'Barski's odd experience in North Hudson Park, New Jersey, he was well-versed in ufology and, by his own account, already receptive to the 'truth' of alien abductions. He was also by then remarried, to April Kingsley, with whom he had a daughter, Grace.

Hopkins's first 'abduction' investigation – in 1977, of a group of hikers in Connecticut who had experienced two hours of 'missing time' – proved inconclusive. But his appearance on an NBC Channel 4 News micro-series on UFOs and abductions in 1979 brought in many new leads. A collaboration with Ted Bloecher and various hypnotherapists resulted in his first book, *Missing Time* (1981). It was singular in that it disposed of the need for abductees to have any conscious memory of a UFO sighting, while introducing the idea that 'screen memories' – for instance of deer or owls – cloaked encounters with alien entities. It also hinted at some kind of alien genetic engineering project behind abductions.

This was to be the major theme of *Intruders* (1987), which proposed that aliens were, by means deemed crude by Earthly gynæcologists, impregnating women abductees with sperm extracted from male abductees, and then spiriting away the resulting fœtuses before they reached full term. Most of Hopkins's 'proof' for these assertions came from hypnotic sessions, which he was now conducting himself. Along with Whitley Streiber's somewhat vaguer *Communion*, published the same year, it shifted the focus of ufological interest for almost two decades. If *Missing Time* had seemed a rather naïve pilgrimage using (as Hopkins admitted) the Betty & Barney Hill abduction story as a map or template, *Intruders* obliged sceptics to note its significance and swarm to the attack. Probably the most relentless assault was Philip Klass's *UFO Abductions: a dangerous game* (1989), which demolished any pretensions hypnosis had as a tool for retrieving 'repressed' memories. Hopkins – calling Klass 'cold' – eventually refused to appear in public with his most enthusiastic detractor.

This was not atypical of his response to criticism or even the possibility thereof. He refused to allow transcripts of his hypnosis sessions to be analysed by a MUFON project because, according to report, he allegedly feared they would provide fuel to sceptics, and balked at the suggestion that his collection of – allegedly remarkably consistent – 'alien' writings be assessed independently. One long-time associate remarked that such intransigence made one "want to wring his neck". While Hopkins was indubitably kind, generous, courteous and indeed entertaining among those he trusted not to question him, the sense that he made himself the leader of a cult is difficult to dismiss. It's a little-known fact that after graduating from Oberlin, Hopkins had been accepted as a student by Princeton Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian institution that "prepares women and men to serve Jesus Christ in ministries marked by faith, integrity, scholarship, competence, compassion, and joy". In one interpretation, at least, he became a priest of sorts in any case.

Hopkins's last major work was *Witnessed* (1997), a labyrinthine tale centred on the abduction of Linda Napolitano (Cortile, in the book) under the eyes of various people including, legend has it, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations. Sympathisers were impressed, while others were not. He also wrote *Sight Unseen* (2003) with his third wife, Carol Rainey, and a memoir, *Life, Art, and UFOs* (2009).

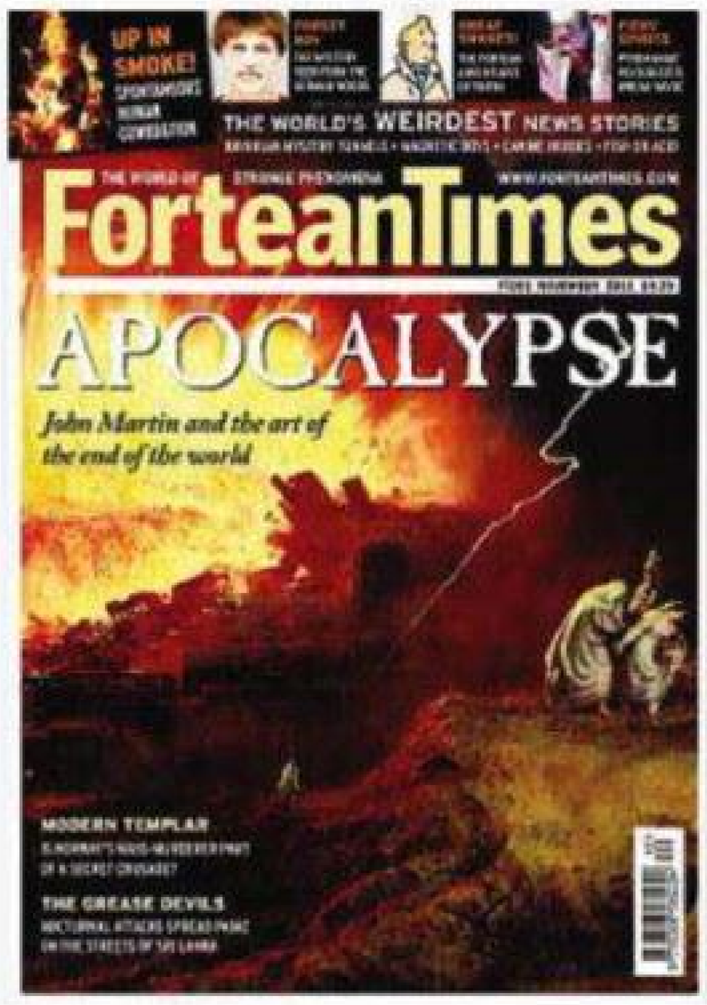
Without doubt, Hopkins extended the scope of the notion of 'alien abductions' and, with his long-time colleague David Jacobs, made some sense of it for those who endued the phenomenon with a measure of reality. To sceptics, he spread more harm than good. For those in the middle, he made a huge contribution to the UFO *mythos*, and thereby revealed more of us to ourselves than many would care to contemplate. His artworks transcend all that, and will, one hopes, be his most enduring memorial.

*Elliott Budd Hopkins, abstract expressionist painter, sculptor and alien-abduction advocate, born Wheeling, West Virginia, 15 June 1931; died Manhattan, New York, 21 Aug 2011, aged 80.*

**Peter Brookesmith**

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES
ForteanTimes
Unmasking the Bard
Will the real Shakespeare please stand up?

# Christmas gift subscriptions for just £29.99


UP IN SMOKE!
THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES
ForteanTimes
APOCALYPSE
John Martin and the art of the end of the world
MODERN TEMPLAR
THE GREASE DEVILS

A subscription to Fortean Times is the perfect gift for anyone with a sense of adventure, curiosity, natural scepticism and a good sense of humour.

**9 issues £29.99 – SAVE 21%**

**Give a gift subscription for just £29.99 and your lucky recipient will receive:**

- **9 issues of Fortean Times (worth £38.25 in the shops)**
- Hot-off-the-press magazines
- FREE delivery direct to their door
- Information on the most fantastic phenomena on earth

Merry Christmas

*Receive a free card to personalise and send to your recipient**

***Even more titles are available at: www.magazinedeals.co.uk/xmas***

## GIFT SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

☐ **YES!** I want to give someone a gift they REALLY want this Christmas.
**Fortean Times £29.99 – 9 issues (SAVE 21%)**

**YOUR DETAILS** **Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS**

MR/MRS/MS FORENAME
SURNAME
ADDRESS
POSTCODE
DAYTIME PHONE YEAR OF BIRTH
MOBILE PHONE
EMAIL

**Gift recipient details**

MR/MRS/MS FORENAME
SURNAME
ADDRESS
POSTCODE
DAYTIME PHONE
EMAIL

*To receive your free greetings card in time for Christmas, gift orders must be received by the 9th December 2011. This offer closes on the 31st December 2011. All gift subscriptions will start with the January 2012 issue.

**CHEQUE OR CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PAYMENT**

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd. for £29.99
☐ Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX
☐ Debit/Maestro (Issue No. ☐)

CARD NO. START DATE EXPIRY DATE

SIGNED TODAY'S DATE

*3 EASY WAYS TO PAY*

1 **ORDER ONLINE AT**
**www.dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes**
**USING OFFER CODE P1112XFTX**

2 **CALL 0844 844 0053**

3 **COMPLETE THE ORDER FORM AND RETURN IT TO:**
**FREEPOST RLZS-ETGT-BCZR, Fortean Times Christmas Offer,**
**800 Guillat Ave, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne ME9 8GU**
(This address can also be used on an envelope – no stamp required)

**Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd** uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website **www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/** or call us on **0844 844 0053.** If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise,that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, e-mail and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via **www.subsinfo.co.uk** or **privacy@dennis.co.uk** or **0844 844 0053.**

OFFER CODE
P1112XFTX

# BLASTS FROM THE PAST

*FORTEAN TIMES* BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

## 34 WHEN BIGFOOT WAS YOUNG

**ULRICH MAGIN** discovers that the first printed reports of Sasquatch sightings in North America don't match up with current descriptions or notions of the creature at all.

Whether we believe in it or not, we all know that Sasquatch or Bigfoot is a giant, hairy ape, though perhaps more man than animal, that roams North America, especially the region around British Columbia. At least 2.5m (8ft) tall, the creature is strongly built, covered with thick hair, and generally resembles an upright gorilla.

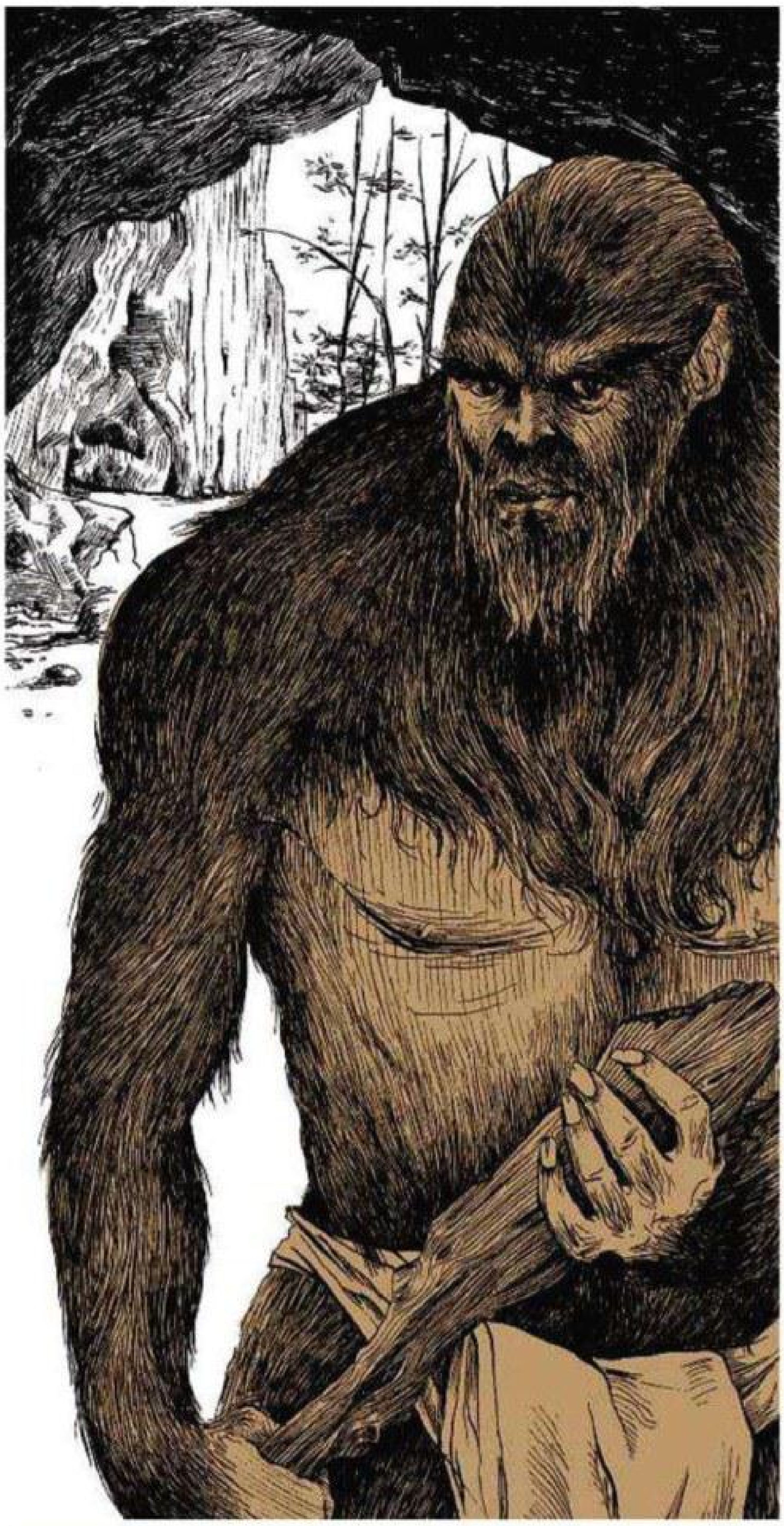
There are suggestions that Sasquatch was 'ethno-known', and that Indians had encountered the creatures for centuries before the white man learned of them. However, newspapers started to report on Sasquatch (as opposed to 'wild men of the woods') only in the 1930s – the time when lake monsters like Caddy and Nessie also made their debuts, and when Ogopogo, Canada's Lake Okanogan monster, made headlines throughout the state of British Columbia.

The first newspaper I have found in which the term Sasquatch occurs is the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* of 2 March 1934 (American researchers will certainly find older examples), in a United Press report from Montreal:

*A giant wild man who has been terrorizing residents of Harrison Mills, near Vancouver, has caused revival of legends of a vanished race of "hairy mountain man", according to dispatches here today.*

*The wild man, described as "huge, hairy and nearly nude", has been seen three times in as many months according to the reports. The last person he frightened was Frank Dean of Harrison Mills.*

*Dean was aroused during the night by the barking of his dog. He stepped out of the door of his cabin and saw, in clear starlight, a huge hairy man who advanced at his growling. Dean leaped back inside his cabin and barred his door. Tracks in the snow next day showed the wild man had prowled around the cabin and later gone into the bush.*



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

"Indians said that many years ago a whole tribe of the men lived in the region. They were called 'sasquatch' or 'hairy mountain men'. They lived in caves, hunting with clubs and stones."

*A hunter also said he saw the wild man and was so frightened that he dropped his bag of game as he fled before the giant's attack.*

*Indians of the Chelais Reserve, asked about the creature, said that many years ago a whole tribe of the men lived in the region. They were called 'sasquatch' or 'hairy mountain men'. They lived in caves and hunted with clubs and stones."*[1]

Sasquatch here, in one of his earliest newspaper appearances, does not look very much like an ape. He obviously wears some sort of clothing (or couldn't be "nearly nude"), hunts with clubs, and makes a permanent home in a cave (something which cryptozoologists, when writing today, stress was never reported of Sasquatch). Although footprints were seen, their size is not remarked upon. Hard on the heels of this sighting came the first expedition, this time reported from Vancouver, BC:

*The first 'Sasquatch' catching expedition in history headed into the mountains of British Columbia on Sunday on a hunt for the horrible, hairy, naked bogeyman of Indian legend.*

*JF Blakeney and CK Blakeney, brothers of Sacramento, medical students at the University of California, read reports of frightened tribesmen that the giant baby-snatcher of old had been seen recently in the mountains north of Harrison Lake and determined to attempt to photograph or lasso a 'Sasquatch'.*

*The fabled Sasquatch as described in Indian lore for hundreds of years, is about as villainous a phantom as ever frightened a little papoose anywhere, but adult Indians are also fearful of the monsters.*

*They are supposed to lurk in caves and glades of British*

*Columbia, coming out in the twilight to peer moodily into Indian houses to glower and snatch at children to steal food, play diabolical tricks and even kill warriors.*

*"Our professor of anthropology will be much interested," said the Blakeneys, as they left for the place where Indians say the Sasquatch lives.* [2]

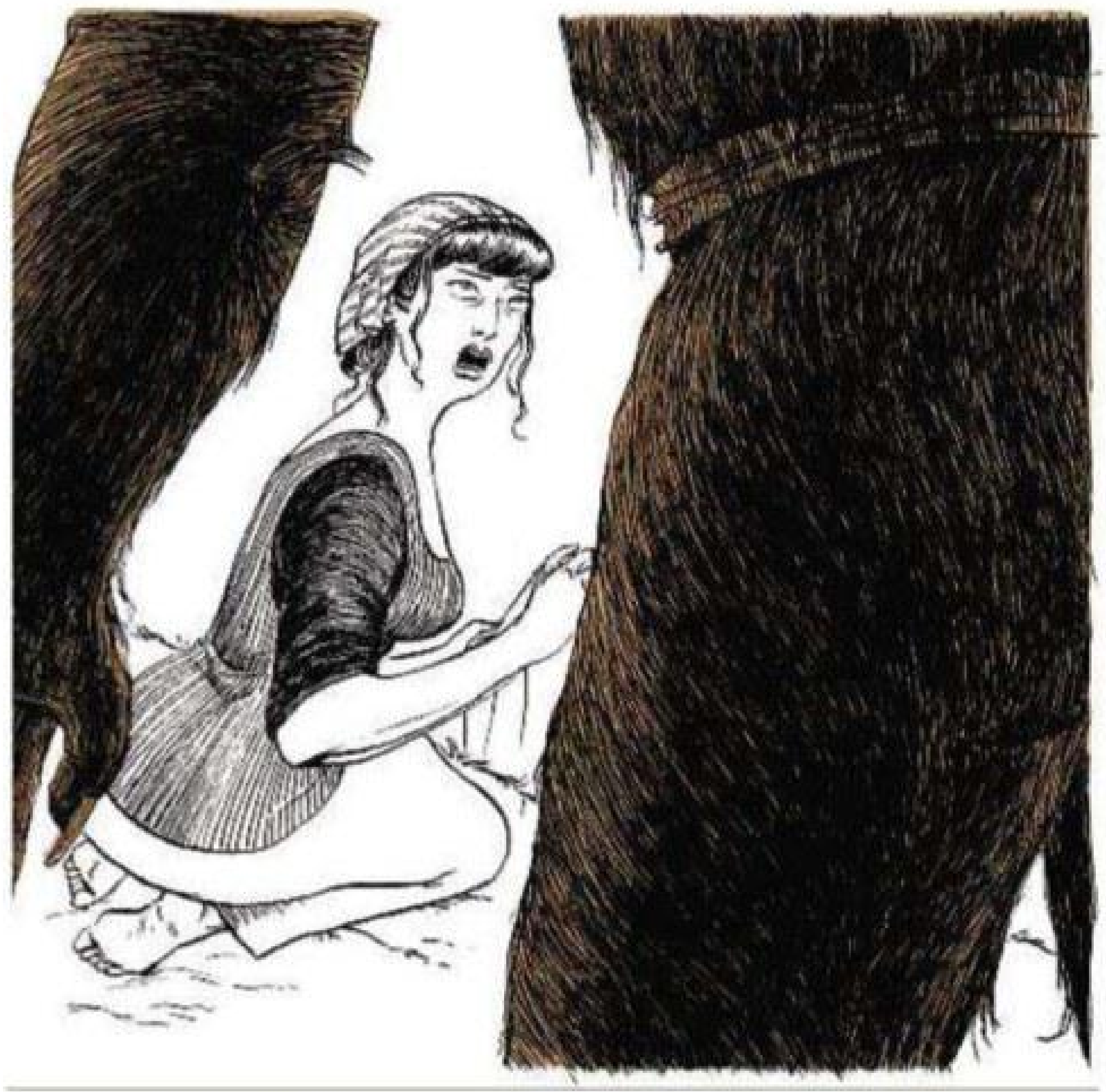
Less human-like than in the previous report, Sasquatch is here portrayed as a dangerous beast, stealing babies and killing hunters – more of a goblin or witch than a large bipedal ape. And soon new sightings were reported:

*Mrs James Caufield, of Chepalis, near Harrison, related how she was backed into a tub of suds under the hypnotic stare of a giant hairy Sasquatch one day last week.*

*There had been no appearance of these strange hairy giants from the mountains for more than six weeks. During the last year there have been several undoubted visits from these huge mysterious animal-like men into scattered settlements near the bush.*

*Mrs Caufield relates that she was washing clothes in a rivulet in the early afternoon. She thought she heard something buzzing – the sort of noise a humming bird makes when it is dancing in front of a flower. "I turned my head to look for the pretty bird," she said, "but instead of a bird there stood the most terrible thing I ever saw in my life. I thought I'd die for the thing that made the funny noise was a big man covered with hair from head to foot. He was looking at me and I couldn't help looking at him. I guessed he was a Sasquatch so I covered my eyes with my hand, for the Indians say that if a Sasquatch catches your eye you are in his power. They hypnotize you. I felt faint and as I backed away to get to the house I went plop into the tub of suds. Mrs Caufield screamed and her husband came running out of the house just in time to see the Sasquatch trotting off into the bush.*

*The last authenticated appearance of the Sasquatch was on March 23 when he hurled rocks into a canoe.* [3]


CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

"Mrs Caufield was washing clothes in a rivulet in the early afternoon. She heard something buzzing like a humming bird dancing in front of a flower... The thing that made the funny noise was a big man covered with hair."

This special report of the *Montreal Gazette* about "a big man" (would the Sasquatch we all know from the Patterson movie be described in such a way?) was taken up by the news agencies and further information was added, such as the fact that it had been believed locally that Sasquatch were an Indian tribe who had become extinct some 30 years ago:

*Reports that survivors of the tribe of wild men known as "Sasquatch," a race of ferocious hairy giants, who dwelt in caves in British Columbia years ago, still are roaming the rocky wilds near Vancouver, have been revived here.*

*The tribe was believed to have become extinct 30 years ago, but during the last year it frequently has been reported that survivors have been seen prowling near scattered settlements around Vancouver. The wild men are described as "hairy giants, nine feet [2.7m] tall, with a ferocious appearance and demeanor…*

*Mrs James Caufield, living on a farm near Harrison, BC, is the latest to report seeing one of the giants.* [4]

No matter how monstrous or dangerous Sasquatch is, these early reports all describe something closer to a big, hairy man than an ape – although the nine-foot height given in the last report is fascinating. In all these early accounts, North America's 'ape-man' is not even once compared to an ape or a gorilla. I find it of interest also that the first expedition to Sasquatch country was done by people from the very region where Bigfoot would start to appear 20 years later.

Finally, by 1938, Sasquatch was already commercially used for tourism. As the Associated Press reported from Harrison Hot Springs:

*Indians of British Columbia, home of the Ogopogo, legendary lake-dwelling water snake, and his terrifying saltwater-cousin, the sea serpent – paid homage today to Sasquatch, the hairy ones.*

*An estimated 2,000 from tribes in the territory and Washington state converged on a gaily Indian village here, bringing grotesque native masks and costumes. It's Sasquatch Indian day, and no place for skeptics.*

*You either take the Sasquatch or leave them alone. There is no middle course.*

*Many Indians take the straight [path]. To hear tell, the Sasquatch were great hairy legendary creatures that maintain their reputation with an occasional present-day swoop from the mountains to peek in windows or smack down a lone tribesman.*

*Others, Indian agent JW Burns explained, take a milder view.*

*"Despite their great size – about seven feet [2.1m] in height – the Sasquatch were timid and harmless," Burns said the Indians believe.*

*"They were believed to be covered with a growth of hair and to live in caves and hollow trees. The legend probably came down from the actual existence of some primitive race. I believe in it myself."*

*Legend or not, the celebration today and tomorrow will see braves, squaws and papooses living again as their ancestors did before white men came. Against a background of historic Harrison lake and river, an Indian village of 20 lodges, bright with traditional ochred drawings and totem symbols, occupies a square mile [2.6sq km] of cleared brushland.*

*Dressed in full tribal regalia, Indians prepared to start a day's celebration with a parade.*

*Night events will include forbidden torchlight fish-spearing, for which special permission has been granted by the dominion fisheries department, ceremonial dances and campfire recitals of Indian folklore.* [5]

**NOTES**

**1** "Huge, Hairy Giant Reported By Trio, Reviving Legend", *Berkeley Daily Gazette*; "Prowls Again In Northwest", *Rochester Evening Journal*, adds: "They are things of horror, dwelling in caves, on the borders of lakes and in mountain fast", while "Fearsome 'Wild Men' On Prowl, So Indian Tribesmen State", *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* atmospherically starts: "Indian children stayed close to their mothers' apron strings today for the fearsome sasquatch had returned to spread terror." All dated 3 Mar 1934.

**2** "California Students Hunt 'horrible, Hairy Giant Baby-snatcher'", *Lewiston Daily Sun*, 7 Apr; "Fabled Baby Snatcher Sought. America's First Sasquatch-Catching Expedition", *Los Angeles Times*; "Bogeyman Sought. Brothers Head Into Mountains of BC", *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, p11; "Start Hunt For The 'Sasquatch'", *Spartanburg, SC, Herald*, p5, 9 Apr 1934; "Search For Sasquatch In Interior", *Calgary Daily Herald*; see also: "American To Hunt Terrible Sasquatch", *Kentucky New Era*, 10 Apr 1934.

**3** "Woman Sees Wildman. Says it sounded Like Humming Bird as it Approached", *Montreal Gazette*, 22 May 1934.

**4** "Hairy Tribe of Wild Man in Vancouver", *San Jose News*, 18 Aug. Other versions were published, sometimes months after the encounter: "Hairy Giants Seen, Report. Survivors Of Wild Tribe, Supposedly Extinct. Appear Near Vancouver", *Milwaukee Journal*, 4 June; "Tribe of Hairy People Found at Vancouver", *Newburgh News*, p12, 12 July 1934.

**5** "Indians Gather To Do Honour To Legendary, Hairy Ones. British Columbia Aborigines Revive Ancient Lore Of Sasquatch", *Miami News*, 23 May 1938.

# DON THE TALKING DOG

Ever feel your pets "understand every word you say"? What if they could not only answer back but tell you just what was on their minds? **Dr JAN BONDESON** reveals the remarkable story of some quite extraordinary animals that toured the theatres of Europe and America. Pictures from the author's collection except where otherwise indicated.

In 1715, one of the most startling notices ever was inserted into that sober journal, the *Histoire de l'Academie Royale des Sciences*. It emanated from the pen of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and reported the case of a talking dog. Having heard of this remarkable animal from a German prince who had seen it at the Ostermesse in Leipzig in 1712, the great philosopher went to see the dog perform. This animal, a male dog of moderate size and very common shape, was born and bred in Zeiss near Meissen in Saxony. It was alleged that a little boy had heard the then three-year-old dog utter some words, without prior tuition, and decided to teach it to speak properly. The dog's master, a countryman, soon took over the training, with Teutonic thoroughness. After some years, the dog could pronounce about 30 words, 'thé', 'caffé', 'chocolat' and 'assemblée' among them. It was left unexplained why the animal had such a preference for French words that had been assimilated into the German language. The dog spoke only by echo, repeating the word in question after the master. It was not beaten or scolded during the performance, which probably took place at some country fair visited by Leibniz.

When publishing Leibniz's short note, the Paris Academy of Sciences thought it necessary to add the caveat that had the dog's performance not been witnessed by the great Leibniz himself, they would not have printed it.

Since the remarkable dog seen and heard by Leibniz had no immediate successor, the world would hear very little about talking dogs for many years. In the early 1800s, there was a story about a wealthy Englishman who heard a dog order "Biftek, pommes" at a Paris restaurant, sitting opposite his master with a plate in front of him. But after the Englishman had bought the dog, he discovered that the seller had been "a travelling ventriloquist, who had thrown his voice into the dog". In another case from Paris, a circus performer had sold a talking dog to a publican for 400 francs. When the offer was accepted, the indignant dog exclaimed: "So you sell me, do you! Then I shall never talk again!" To be sure, the dog never spoke another word, and when the ventriloquist was taken to court, he was acquitted and the publican much laughed at.

Leibniz scholars have had much difficulty explaining why their hero would bother with such a pointless curiosity as a performing dog, some claiming that the great philosopher had actually been deceived by a clever ventriloquist, like the two individuals mentioned above.

It would take the better part of two centuries before Leibniz was finally vindicated by a talking dog called Don…

## DON SPEAKS

It began in 1910, when Alexander Graham Bell proudly announced to the American press that after long effort and nearly superhuman persistence, he had succeeded in teaching a terrier to speak. The great inventor claimed that this dog could say "How do you do, Grandmama," pronouncing it "Ow-a-goo-ga-mama." Although Bell's latest breakthrough hardly rivalled patenting the telephone, the journalists were impressed. Indeed, the story about the talking dog appeared in newspapers all over the globe – including those read in the little village of Theerhütte, on the Lüneburg heath in Germany.

The next week, the same paper contained a letter from local gamekeeper Herman Ebers, who claimed that his own dog, the German pointer (or *Vorstehhund*) Don, had begun talking spontaneously five years earlier, and that this extraordinary dog now had a vocabulary of six words, all of which he used intelligently. The German press was flabbergasted. Telegrams and letters inundated the tiny Theerhütte post office, inquiring whether the gamekeeper was really in the possession of a dog of such unique talents. With

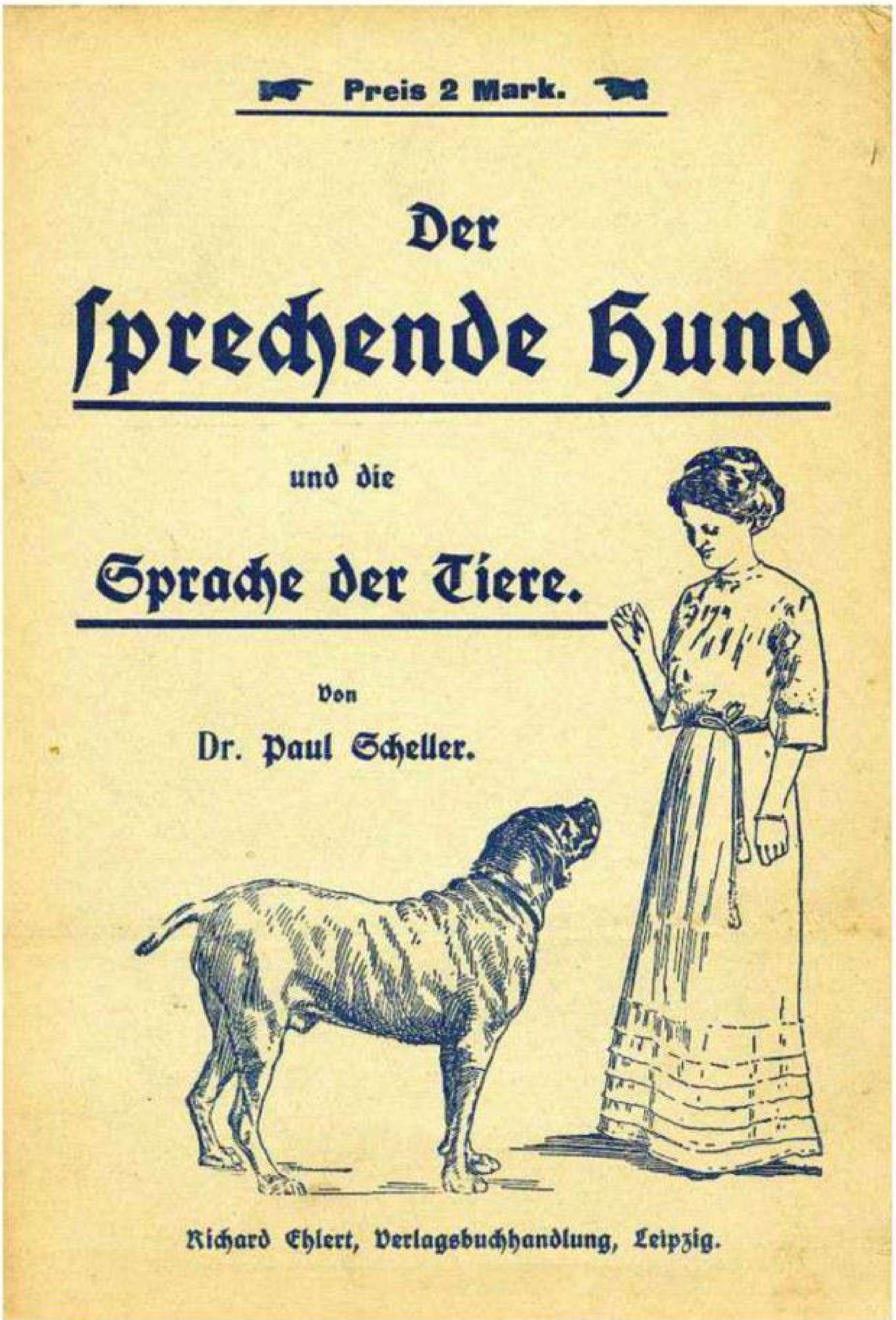
Teutonic curtness, Ebers replied: "Story true. Inspection is permitted."

First to arrive was Austrian journalist Carl Haberland. He asked the dog his name, and was answered by a gruff "Don!" After further conversation, Haberland was so impressed that he offered to become the talking dog's manager, and the rustic gamekeeper, who felt out of his depth among city dwellers, accepted.

In the coming weeks, journalist after journalist came to see and interview Don; none of them went away disappointed, writing long and enthusiastic accounts of this zoological wonder. That a simple German pointer, living in a small country village, completely outclassed Alexander Graham Bell's American talking dog, called for much nationalist celebration. The German journalists, who do not seem to have known much about dogs, wondered whether Don was the reincarnation of a human being, or if he might be a new kind of super-dog, heralding a future when spoken communication between Man and his Best Friend would become perfectly possible. An amateur zoologist considered that certain anatomical peculiarities, like Don's exceptionally high forehead, strongly supported the latter notion.

In November 1910, the Hamburg correspondent of the *New York Times* made inquiries about Don. The talking dog was quite a handsome specimen, he asserted, with well-groomed dark fur and an intelligent facial expression. When interviewed, Herr Ebers said that Don had started to speak at the age of just six months. Once, when Ebers had been sitting at table with a cake in his hand, Don had sauntered up and Ebers had jokingly asked what he wanted. He was completely taken aback when Don replied "Haben!" (to have) in a deep, masculine voice. To make sure he was not mistaken, he had repeated the question, to which the dog again answered "Haben! Haben!"

Herr Ebers decided to educate the talking dog further. It did not take long before Don learned to repeat his own name when prompted. With time, he also learnt the words "Hunger", "Kuchen" (cakes), and "Ruhe" (rest) well-nigh perfectly. His record effort to date had been a sentence of four words: "Don hungry, wants cakes!" Recently, this remarkable dog had also mastered "Ja" and "Nein" – "Yes" and "No" – and was using these words in an intelligent manner, Ebers asserted. When asked whether he wanted to go outside when the weather was wet or damp, Don always answered "Nein!" Some sceptics had likened Don's speech to barking or growling, but the journalist and others who had heard the dog wholly disagreed.



Preis 2 Mark.

Der
ſprechende Hund
und die
Sprache der Tiere.
von
Dr. Paul Scheller.

Richard Ehlert, Verlagsbuchhandlung, Leipzig.

**ABOVE:** One of the books covering Don's eloquent life. **FACING PAGE:** Don the Austrian talking dog.

A certain Dr Paul Scheller, who took an interest in animal communication, also went to see the talking dog. He was particularly impressed with how clearly Don spoke, in a deep voice that seemed to emanate from the very depths of his throat. When Scheller called the talking dog's name, the animal went up to him and clearly repeated "Don!" Later, Don went up to the gamekeeper's daughter, Fräulein Martha Ebers, who was preparing lunch, and said "Don Kuchen haben!" Later, when Scheller was leaving the Ebers family, the gamekeeper said "Don, wollen wir ausgehen?" (Don, should we go for a walk?) "Ja!" the talking dog replied with alacrity.

WITH TIME, DON LEARNED THE WORDS FOR HUNGER, CAKE AND REST

Having read about Don in the newspapers, the director of the Hamburg Zoological Gardens, Professor Julius Vosseler, summoned the talking dog to Hamburg for his speaking ability to be properly assessed. Vosseler was no gullible enthusiast, but a distinguished biologist who had published many valuable books and articles. He thought Don a solid-looking brown *Vorstehhund*, with an elegant head and soulful eyes. Since Don was used to his quiet rural surroundings, he was somewhat flustered by the bustling Hamburg street life, but when asked to perform for the professor, he went through his entire repertoire without any mishaps. Prof. Vosseler, who had suspected the talking dog to be a newspaper hoax, was much impressed: Don spoke more clearly than most talking parrots. He pronounced the vowels 'u' and 'e' very distinctly, more so than 'a' and 'o'. He could not say 'i' at all, except when the professor pinched him to make him give a squeal. When Don spoke, he never barked or growled; with a look of great concentration, gazing at his young

**LEFT:** Martha Ebers encourages Don to speak. She married Don's manager and toured theatres in Europe and America.

mistress Martha Ebers and wagging his tail slowly, he made every effort to imitate her words.

## THE MOST VALUABLE DOG IN THE WORLD

Herr Ebers and the journalist Carl Haberland, who masterminded Don's emerging career, refused several offers to buy the talking dog. A wealthy German who offered $15,000 was turned down, as was an enterprising publisher who offered $5,000 for the souvenir postcard rights alone. Herr Hagenbeck, proprietor of the celebrated Hamburg menagerie, offered $2,500 for the right to exhibit Don at the zoo, but Haberland was waiting for a higher bidder among the many impresarios who managed music hall acts, a style of performance for which the talking dog was ideally suited. Don was kept indoors at all times during this waiting game, since Ebers and Haberland were wary of dognappers, and almost equally fearful of photographers lurking in the bushes to issue pirated picture postcards of the celebrated talking dog.

On 2 April 1911, Don made his debut at the Wintergarten music hall in Berlin. The dog spoke loudly and clearly, and was rewarded with thunderous applause. The day before, he had won over an audience of 40 sceptical Berlin journalists with a bravura performance, including what appeared to be intelligent use of "Ja" and "Nein". When asked who had first made him famous in the newspapers, Don clearly said "Haberland!" This gentleman, still employed as Don's personal manager, now doubled as the fiancé of Martha Ebers. While guarantees for the scientific authenticity of Don's speech had been provided by Prof. Vosseler and other zoologists, Don's supporters also received a dubious new recruit: Karl Krall, the champion of the 'new animal psychology', which argued that the higher animals were nearly as intelligent as human beings, possessing not only consciousness but also a soul, could not resist the temptation to publicly proclaim his support for this super-intelligent talking dog. This outraged the rationalists, to whom the name Krall already was anathema, and served to link the talking dog with Krall's other dubious theories (see **FT278:36–42**).

WAGGING HIS TAIL, DON IMITATED HIS YOUNG MISTRESS MARTHA EBERS

By August, Don was earning 12,000 marks a month at the music hall. He no longer needed direction from his master; in fact, he had become a very headstrong and independent dog, who spoke only when he wanted to. Like any star, he was sometimes sulky and unwilling to perform, unless some suitable delicacies were produced in place of the cake the simple country dog had once so coveted. Once, a religious Swiss visitor to the music hall had objected to the dog show, exclaiming that it was an abomination of God's nature that a dog should be able to speak. But after Don had unexpectedly called out "Hallelujah!" the Swiss knelt in wonderment, praising the talking dog for his religious zeal. He offered to settle a generous pension on Don if the dog came to his local church to speak, or rather preach, but there is no record indicating that such a bizarre canine sermon ever took place.

Don's long stay in Berlin was followed by a tour of other German music halls, and a visit to the large cities of Poland and Russia. In May 1912, he was contracted to perform at Hammerstein's Victoria Roof Garden in New York for the coming season, with a weekly salary of $1,500. By this time, Carl Haberland had married Martha Ebers, and the gamekeeper had given Don to them as a wedding present. In late June, Don had arrived in London, where the underwriters at Lloyds refused to insure the talking dog, since they had negative experience with animals making transatlantic journeys. But the wealthy Oscar and William Hammerstein solved the problem by giving Haberland a bond that they would pay him $50,000 should the talking dog expire on the journey from London to New York. This made Don the most valuable dog in the world.

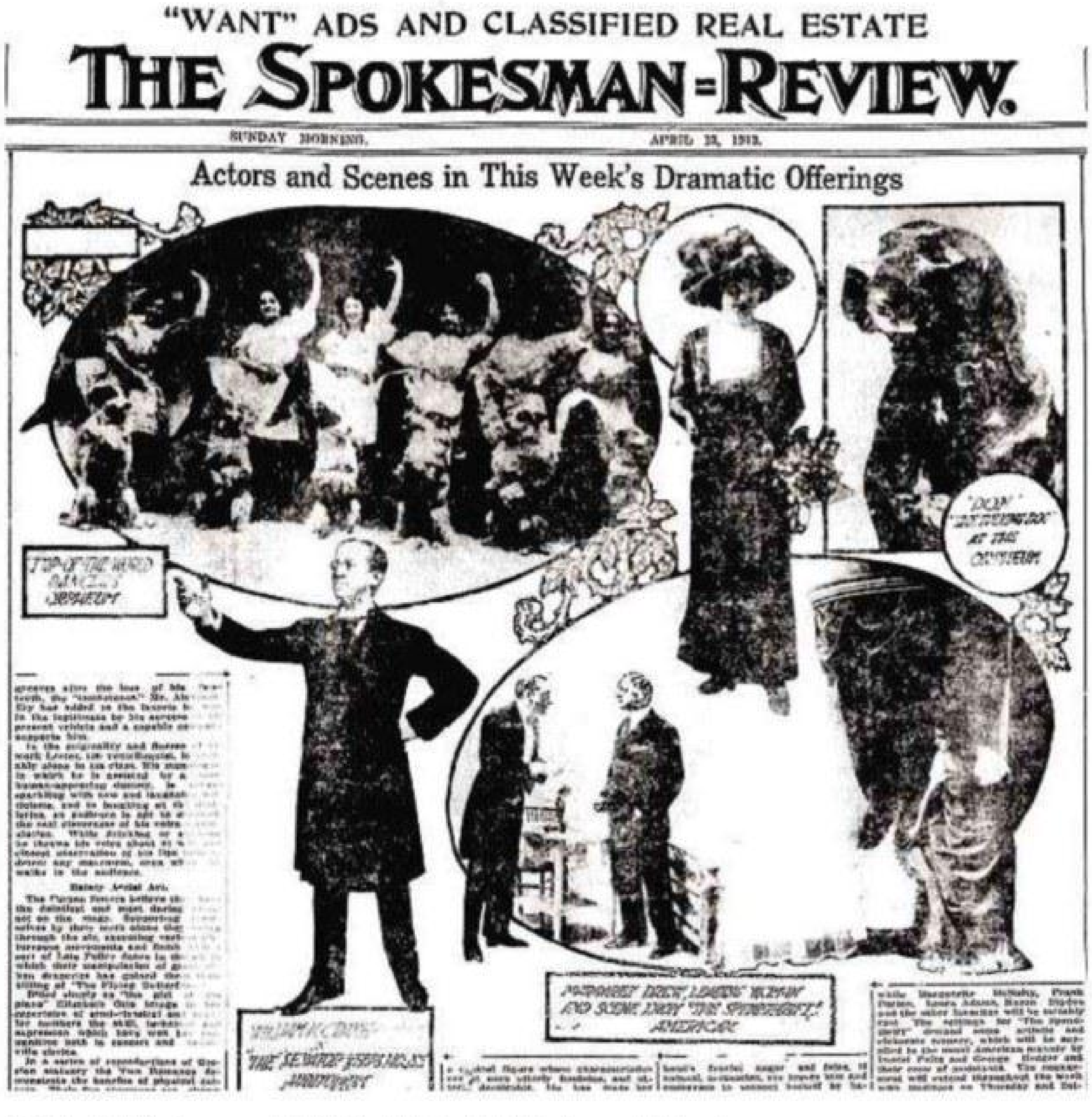
## OSKAR PFUNGST, PET DETECTIVE

But trouble was brewing for Don and his entourage. Prof. Vosseler had appeared in Don's advertisement posters to affirm that the talking dog's act was not a fraud. But, since then, two sceptical experts had entered the fray: the animal psychologist Dr Oskar Pfungst and his colleague Dr Erich Fischer, both belonging to the anti-Krall lobby. Pfungst had been instrumental in debunking the 'thinking horse' Clever Hans, demonstrating that this animal was directed through hidden signs from its owner (see **FT278:39**). Pfungst seems to have been a prejudiced, rigid character, whose opinion of the intellect of dogs was very low. Although he had studied them for just two years, he boldly stated that due to "the animals' vagueness of perception and extremely low degree of attention" dogs were entirely incapable of learning even the simplest tasks by observation and imitation! It is hardly surprising, then, that Pfungst found many faults with Don's performance. The dog did not speak clearly, and was sometimes entirely tongue-tied when asked to perform. Using an Edison Home Phonograph, the cunning German made a recording of the speaking dog and played it for some people who were not allowed to hear Martha Haberland's part of the 'conversation'. Only two out of 16 words were entirely intelligible, and disinterested hearers found difficulties in distinguishing his "Hunger" from his "Haben", and his "Ruhe" from his "Kuchen", although they were flabbergasted when Don suddenly said "Hallelujah!" quite clearly without being prompted.

Pfungst wanted to do another 'Clever Hans', exposing Don as a humbug and striking a blow against Krall and the intelligent animal fanatics. But Prof. Vosseler interceded in Don's favour. Firstly, he rightly argued that a talking dog remained a great scientific curiosity, even if it sometimes got its pronunciation wrong. Secondly, would it really be wise of Pfungst to openly challenge all the journalists and dignitaries, including Vosseler himself, who had previously eulogised Don? And what would the Berliners think of the 'animal shrink' who denigrated Germany's famous talking dog? Grinding his teeth, the ambitious psychologist had to be content with publishing a summary of his results in an obscure newspaper supplement.

But after Don left to conquer America, Pfungst felt his promise to Vosseler was no longer valid, nor was his concern for the German people's pride in their talking dog. At a psychology conference in Berlin in April 1912, Pfungst openly challenged Vosseler for allowing his enthusiasm to pervert his sound scientific judgment. It was not the dog that was the problem, the pet detective pontificated: it was the human beings who were easy victims of suggestion and trickery. It was ludicrous that Don should be paid $1,500 per week, and just as freakish that Don's successor on the Berlin stage, a poodle who could only speak two words, was paid 1,400 marks for the same period of time, much more than Pfungst's own salary!

And Germany's answer to Ace Ventura was not done yet. The cunning psychologist sent a translation of his work to his American colleague Harry Miles Johnson, of Johns Hopkins University, urging him to expose the talking dog in a leading American scholarly journal. Pfungst was concerned for his own reputation, he claimed, since Don's management team were claming that not only Vosseler, but also he himself, was endorsing the dog's performances in Germany. Johnson, another anti-Krall rationalist, agreed to help. With excellent timing, his article was published in *Science* in May 1912, just as Don was expected in New York.



"WANT" ADS AND CLASSIFIED REAL ESTATE

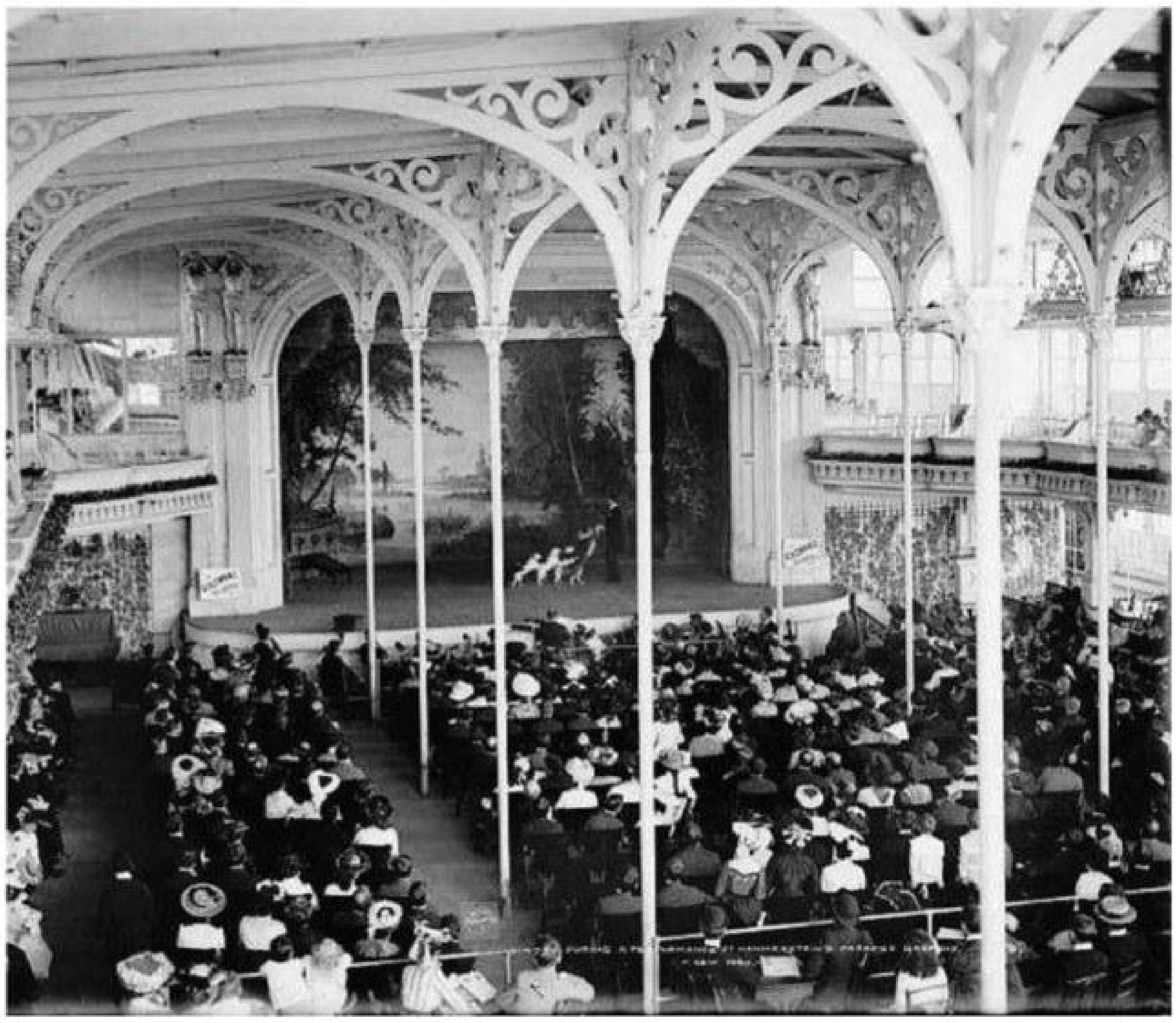
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW.

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1913.

Actors and Scenes in This Week's Dramatic Offerings

**ABOVE:** Publicity for a music hall bill which included Don's specialist act.

**BELOW:** A dog performance seen on stage at Hammerstein's Rooftop Garden Theater, New York.

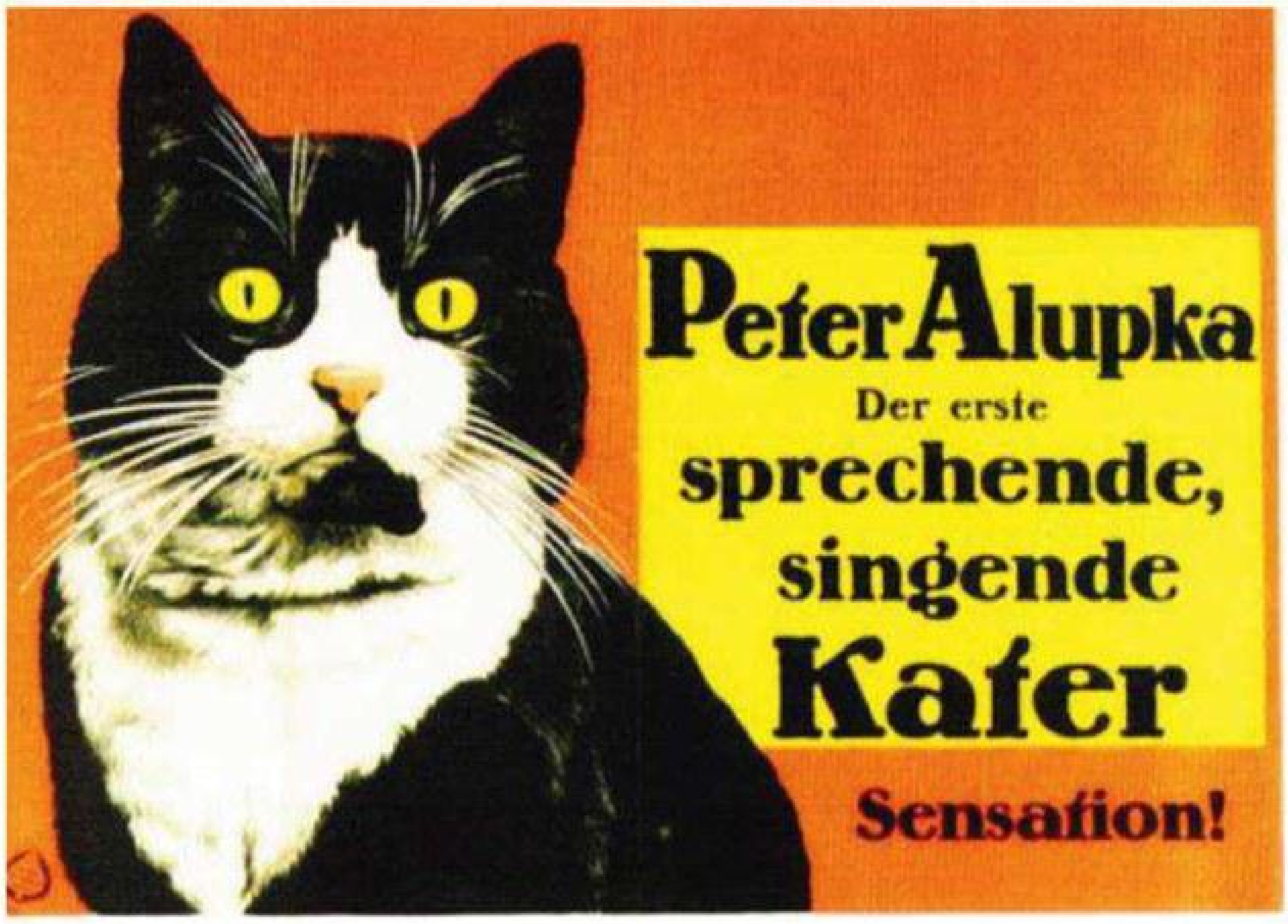


## DON ON BROADWAY

Pfungst's activities were not the only concern for Don's management team ahead of the talking dog's New York debut. They had nagging doubts as to whether a dog speaking only German could really become a success among New Yorkers with no shortage of alternative amusements. Furthermore, the Haberlands had been shocked to find out that Hammerstein's Paradise Roof Garden, situated at the corner of 42nd and Broadway, was a decidedly rowdy establishment. Managed by Oscar Hammerstein's son Willie, it charged only a quarter for a ticket and drew large and unruly crowds. Don would be billed along with the Man with the 17ft [5m] Beard, a Swiss yodeller and two tap-dancing midgets. Other regulars included the clumsy Cherry Sisters, known as America's Worst Act. Hammerstein hung a net along the stage to catch the fruit and vegetables the audience were encouraged to throw at the poor girls. Would Don share the fate of these weird performers, and would the hostile crowd, waving their copies of *Science* magazine, pelt the talking dog with rotten tomatoes?

But the clever Oscar and Willie Hammerstein had thought matters through before investing in the talking dog. They reassured the Haberlands that Don would be treated with respect, and that the risk of any of their audience reading *Science* magazine was extremely low. They were proven right: Don's 15 July debut was a great success. Prompted by the pretty Martha Haberland, wearing traditional

# OTHER TALKING DOGS AND CATS



**ABOVE:** "The Speaking Cat of Germany". **BELOW:** Peter of Croydon greeted his owner, Mrs Field, as "Mum".

Don's great success in show business paved the way for other talking animals, all over the world. There were several other talking dogs in Germany, some of them securing lucrative theatre engagements after Don had left for America. In London, the Airedale terrier Buller could say "Mama" and "God save our gracious King".

There were also several talking copycats trying to get in on the act. The American tabby Billikin could say "Milk" and "Mamma", as this talented feline demonstrated at the Atlantic Cat Club in December 1910. Even more successful was Peter Alupka, the Speaking Cat of Germany. Peter toured Europe with some of the leading circuses of the time, always to great acclaim. When the circus historian Alfred Lehmann saw Peter perform, he was amazed how clearly the cat could pronounce certain words, like "nein", "Anna" and "Helene". When the name of Kaiser Wilhelm was mentioned, the patriotic cat exclaimed "Hurrah! Hurrah!" Peter could also sing 'O Tannenbaum' in a high mewing voice, although Lehmann observed that Peter's mistress held his neck in a loving embrace when he performed, clearly to modulate his voice with her fingers. In 1912, Peter Alupka was interviewed by the philosopher Dr Oskar Prochnow, who was impressed by how closely this amazing cat could imitate the human voice. Peter's ambitious mistress even made plans to join Don at the New York music hall, but unfortunately this unique German talking dog-and-cat duet never came to fruition.

The world's next big talking canine was the French bulldog Princess Jacqueline, who had a vocabulary of 20 words, which she was claimed sometimes to use intelligently. In February 1928, she made her debut at the Eastern Dog Show in Boston. A journalist nearly fainted when the dapper-looking little dog clearly said "Hello" when greeted. Her owner, Mrs Mabel A Robinson of Bangor, Maine, told the press that the now three-year-old Princess had been speaking since she was three or four months old. When asked where she wanted to go, she answered "Out!" She could say "ball", "Bangor", "I will" and "I won't", according to her mood. New York dog fancier Frank Dole declared that Princess was the most remarkable dog he had ever seen, and unique in the world. Dr Knight Dunlop, a psychologist at Johns Hopkins University, was equally impressed. Mrs Robinson received several offers for Princess to follow Don into vaudeville, but she decided against it, although the talking dog sometimes showed her skills at various dog shows. When Princess Jacqueline expired from pneumonia in 1934, most American newspapers – and foreign ones as far off as Australia – published the talking dog's obituary.

In 1946, Britain saw the phenomenon of Ben, a talking fox terrier from Royston, Hertfordshire. *Daily Mirror* journalist Noel Whitcomb investigated the talking dog, property of night watchman Alf Brissenden, and was stunned when, as he was having tea in the Brissenden kitchen, the little dog came in, looked hard at him, and said, in a low-pitched, authoritative voice, "I want one!" Mr Brissenden explained that Ben had started talking a year earlier, nearly causing his wife to faint when she heard him for the first time. When he walked Ben and Whitcomb back to the station, the dog stopped outside the public house and remarked, tersely, "I want one!"

"Me too, chum!" the dazed Whitcomb replied.

With the help of Whitcomb's *Mirror* articles, Ben became something of a star. Mr Brissenden was deluged with fan mail and telegrams about his wonderful dog, and hundreds of local people came to see and hear the local celebrity perform. Many dog-fanciers wanted to purchase Ben, including an American showman who offered $10,000 for the dog. But the Brissendens refused to part with their family pet. Ben's finest hour came when the BBC sent a broadcasting team to record the talking dog's voice for their international service. The interview went as follows:

"Well, Ben, have you any puppies?"

Ben: "I want one!"

"If you want puppies, Ben, the first thing is to get a wife."

Ben: "I want one!"

"What do you think of the political situation, Ben?"

Ben: "I want one!"

In 1950, the talking Pekinese Blackie caused quite a sensation in Ceres, Fife. The little dog had caused two lady visitors to faint, and several tradesmen to check whether it had really been tea they had been drinking, by sauntering up to them and saying "Hello!" Blackie sometimes called his fellow Pekinese by exclaiming "Fifi!" The local veterinarian was most impressed by Blackie, as was the judge at a local dog show, who was unexpectedly addressed by the elegant little dog.

In 1953, a fox-terrier in Newcastle, New South Wales, began saying "Hello, Mum!" and "Here I am, Mum", allegedly without any tuition. Embarrassingly for the dog's owner, a clergyman, the dog also spoke "a word often heard in masculine company and not in the ladies' presence". Nevertheless, this foul-mouthed talking dog was given an audience with the Archbishop of Newcastle, The Right Reverend Francis de Witt Batty, who was most impressed with the dog's clear speech.

In January 1962, Noel Whitcomb, the *Daily Mirror*'s talking dog correspondent, again went into action when the two-year-old poodle Trudi spoke to him on the telephone, calling from Epping, just outside London. A photograph and an interview were of course called for, during which the dog said "No" and "I want one!" in a high-pitched voice.

In 1966, Pepe the Talking Chihuahua became a newspaper favourite in California. The tiny dog said "I love you," "How are you?" and "Hello there!" in a shrill, singing voice.

German country costume, the dog spoke loudly and distinctly. An actor named Loney Haskell had been employed as Don's interlocutor; he was an amusing fellow, and soon the audience was roaring with laughter. When the talking dog said "hunger!" for the first time, the audience applauded for nearly a minute without cessation, as the portly, dignified-looking Don wagged his tail and ate cake from Martha Haberland's hand.

The reviews were uniformly positive. According to the *New York Times*, the talking dog was "a sizable brown German forest dog, a little inclined to corpulence, but still good looking". Nothing like him had ever been seen or heard in New York, and it wasn't surprising that Don "received an ovation such as any mere man or woman seldom receives in this theatre".

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY / HARRY PRICE

**LEFT:** Karl Krall (second from left) tried to show that dogs could be trained to answer questions.

Don remained at the Roof Garden until December 1912, rubbing shoulders with the likes of Harry Houdini, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. He then had stints at the Grand Theatre in Pittsburgh, the New Brighton Theatre, and Keith's Bronx Theatre in New York. In August 1913, Martha Haberland was teaching Don to retrieve various objects from the surf at Coney Island. Seeing that a swimmer was struggling in the surf, and waving for help, she indicated him to Don, and the talking dog swam out and grasped the man by his bathing suit. The swimmer grabbed hold of Don, and both went under momentarily, but the talking dog broke free and secured another hold of him. A police constable rode his horse into the surf and rescued the man. He turned out to be the Greek student John Contreca, who was very pleased to have been rescued by the world's most valuable dog.

With the outbreak of World War I, the Haberlands returned to their native land, where the once-famous talking dog died in obscurity in 1916, nursed by his devoted mistress Martha, whose fortune he had made. Plans for his body to be donated to the Rockefeller Institute, whose experts were keen to examine the anatomy of his vocal organs, were never acted upon.

## FOR AND AGAINST

As we have seen, there have been quite a few instances of dogs capable of imitating the human voice more or less accurately, although Don remains the only talking dog to have been properly investigated by the scientists of the time.

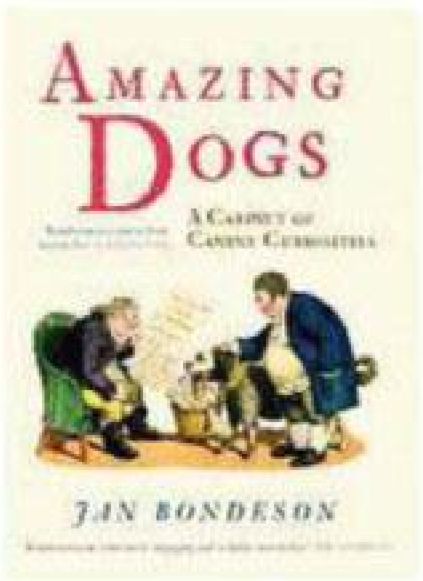
Was Oskar Pfungst right, and was Don just a bluff? It has to be admitted that Pfungst was clever to make a phonograph recording of the talking dog, to remove the element of showmanship, and thus the unconscious wish of the audience that the dog should speak clearly. He also erased Martha Haberland's contribution, and thus the pretence of a conversation.

But by modern standards, it is also clear that Pfungst's study has serious methodological flaws. Firstly, it is not stated how the recordings were procured in the first place, and to what degree fatigue and boredom on the part of the dog played a part. Since Pfungst could hardly have brought his machine to 16 consecutive performances at the Berlin music hall, it seems likely that Don was encouraged to speak for the microphone at least 16 times, hardly the optimal circumstances for him to go through his vocabulary. Secondly, the phonographs used in the 1910s were very primitive instruments: many people would have had considerable difficulties recognizing the word "Kuchen!" spoken by a human being, let alone a dog, through such a machine. Thirdly, Pfungst did not say how the 'jury' was selected: had they been chosen from his own sceptical friends? The final and most serious argument is that Pfungst was very much against Karl Krall's 'New animal psychology' movement. When Krall took sides with the talking dog, the confrontational Pfungst automatically joined the opposition.

It should also be taken into account that Don had several times been examined by other scientists, who were impressed with him. Firstly, as we know, Prof. Vosseler fully endorsed the dog's talking ability, although he was somewhat sceptical as to whether Don was able to use his vocabulary intelligently. Vosseler was quite a distinguished zoologist, and it seems impossible that a person of his stature could have been bribed or persuaded to exaggerate by Don's management team. Importantly, Vosseler was no friend of Krall and had no hidden agenda, just a desire to evaluate the talking dog. The same is true for Dr Oskar Prochnow, a philosopher interested in the development of speech. He also examined Don, and it was clear to him that the dog spoke by imitating Martha Haberland's words, using several distinct sounds: "Haben" sounded like "Uau-on", "Ruhe" was "U-ae" and "Hunger" was "Ung-ae". The dog's vowels were very distinctive, his consonants less so, but still it was not difficult to distinguish the words. Vosseler and Prochnow's arguments in favour of Don are of course strongly supported by the fact that Don was a great success both in Berlin and New York. If Don had not been able to imitate the human voice quite closely, how could he have impressed both German audiences and critical New Yorkers?

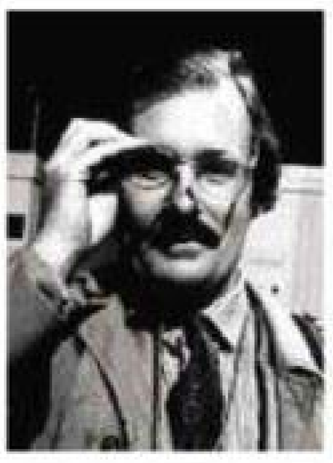
In June 2009, an article in *Scientific American* featured 'Maya', a dog able to say "I love you!" – or rather "Ahh rooo uuu!" A similar dog had performed on the David Letterman show, and several other talking canines can be seen and heard on YouTube. When interviewed, distinguished dog expert Prof. Stanley Coren told the story of a colleague who always greeted her dog with a cheerful, two-syllable "Hel-lo!" It did not take long before the dog returned the greeting!

Present-day cynologists are well aware that dogs are capable of learning by imitation, and they also possess some degree of selective tonal imitation skills; after all, they themselves are adept at expressing their emotions by varying the pitch and tone of their growls. Although the structure of the lips and tongue of the dog are not conducive to the pronunciation of consonants, Don and the other talking dogs were good at imitating the vowels, as Vosseler and Prochnow rightly deduced. Although Don spoke by repetition only during the shows, he sometimes used the words he knew spontaneously; some sources even claimed that he did so intelligently, although this was never properly investigated at the time, mainly due to Pfungst's preconceived ideas about canine intelligence. Still, this amazing canine performer remains the most outstanding example of a dog able to imitate the human voice. FT



Extracted and adapted from *Amazing Dogs: A Cabinet of Canine Curiosities*, by Jan Bondeson, Amberley Publishing, £20.00.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**DR JAN BONDESEN** is a senior lecturer and consultant rheumatologist at the Cardiff University of Medicine, and a frequent *FT* contributor. He has published many books on the odder sides of human and animal behaviour.

# FBI FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

## 114. Weird Weekend 2011

**GEORGE BINNING** finds that the search for unknown animals is thriving in Woolsery, Devon, as cryptozoologists showcase their research findings and prepare to take on academia.

weirdweekend
you've never had it so weird
www.weirdweekend.org

**ABOVE:** Jon Downes welcomes visitors to the latest Weird Weekend in Woolsery, Devon.

GEORGE BINNING

Cryptozoology is often affectionately dismissed as a quixotic hobby, but leading British cryptozoologists hope to bolster the subject's credibility thanks to the weight of their recent discoveries, and the increased use of cutting-edge scientific techniques and rigorous methodology.

The intensive annual event of lectures and presentations that is Weird Weekend gave academics and crypto-enthusiasts the opportunity to learn, trade ideas, compare notes and drink beer. As well as this, Jon Downes – WW organiser and founder of the Centre for Fortean Zoology (CFZ) – revealed plans to release a peer-reviewed journal of cryptozoology; a world first in the field, showing that the crypto-community was finally ready to be subjected to the scrutiny of mainstream academia.

This pivotal moment for the CFZ is the culmination of 20 years of work by Jon and his colleagues, and he is pleased with their progress.

"I'm very, very proud, because I've been doing my best for the last 20 years to weed out some of the nut jobs, and I think we've got 90 per cent of the world's best cryptozoologists under our belt," he said. "The CFZ is a broad church, and very much community-orientated, but I've been trying to steer it for the last 20 years to a situation where cryptozoology is becoming a valid branch of zoology, rather than something akin to the Flat Earth society."

It may be a significant boost for the CFZ, but starting a peer-reviewed cryptozoological journal is not the ultimate goal, as Downes told *FT*.

"For years I have resisted any pressure to start a peer-reviewed journal. I actually agree with Dr Charles Paxton, who says cryptozoology shouldn't be trying to start its own peer-reviewed journal, it should be trying to have cryptozoologically-themed articles published in mainstream zoological journals."

One report the CFZ deemed worthy of scientific attention was the search for the *orang-pendek*, due for coverage in the upcoming journal. Adam Davies, the History Channel adventurer who has hunted the 'real Hobbit' and the 'Chinese Wildman', presented the evidence he had collected so far for the undiscovered, upright-walking primate which is thought to live in Sumatra. The discovery of a new primate would cause huge waves in the zoological world.

Having visited Sumatra three times, finding hairs and footprints, and both hearing and seeing the elusive ape, Davies was cautiously optimistic that the team would find it when they set off to the jungle three weeks later.

There have been numerous sightings by locals, and the first hair samples, analysed in 2009 by Lars Thomas at Copenhagen University, were found to be structurally similar to, but distinct from, an orang-utan's. Unfortunately, they were contaminated by foreign DNA; and while a photograph may be worth 1,000 words, DNA gives a definitive 'yes'.

This time, two teams of five will be armed with 16 camera traps, hair traps, and a vast body of previous intelligence as to where the creature might hide out.

Davies described the urgency of their quest and the tremendous ecological pressure on Sumatra from population growth and palm oil plantations.

"Even after all the scientific evidence I've got, this is still a fringe topic, and we might not have much time before the *orang-pendek* is extinct," he said.

Ablaze with passion, he railed against nay-sayers who dared suggest the *pendek* was a nice excuse for a holiday. The jungle, he said, was a hellish place, with only fish heads and monkey balls to eat.

"We fund the whole trip ourselves, and we really suffer. I can't think of anywhere I'd less like to be than the jungle – if it wasn't for the *orang-pendek*."

Speaking on the eve of departure (8 September) with the grim determination of a soldier before battle, CFZ zoological director and team member Richard Freeman said they were well-prepared and expected things to run to plan.

In another talk of scientific note, Bryan Sykes, celebrated Professor of Human Genetics at the University of Oxford, revealed the opening of a genetic database compiled from 'crowd-sourced' cryptozoological samples. Working in conjunction with Michel Sartori, director of the Museum of Zoology in Lausanne, Switzerland, any genuinely unrecognised DNA, taken from the wild, or from museum pieces, will be collected and archived for future research.

Professor Sykes also gave a lecture on his study into the seven mothers of almost all European people, published as *The Seven Daughters of Eve* (2001). Using the mitochondrial DNA passed down an unbroken maternal chain to every human being, Prof. Sykes claims to have detected the existence of seven women who lived between 11,000 and 50,000 years ago and were ancestors of 97 per cent of modern Europeans [**FT139:12**].

Having championed techniques to extract and replicate DNA from samples as old as 14,000 years, Prof. Sykes explained that there is a popular misconception that DNA always degrades very quickly after death.

"It's the conditions of the

[illegible] he said. “DNA survives well in bones and in teeth, particularly in alkaline environments such as limestone caves where the matrix of the bones is made of a similar mineral to the stone. The DNA doesn’t degrade because the acid stabilises in these environments.”

This sort of science opens up countless possibilities for cryptozoologists. Prof. Sykes is one academic anxious to integrate cryptozoology into the scientific canon. In an interview with *FT*, he described the requirements for crypto-research to achieve this status.

“It is vitally important that cryptozoology should enter the peer-review process,” he said, “and for that reason we need to embrace scientific methodology along with irrefutable DNA evidence.

“Having spent many years getting scientific articles published, and knowing how difficult it can be, even with uncontroversial subjects, I can see that to get articles on cryptids published is going to be difficult, but that’s not a bad idea. As Hume said [of miracles], ‘Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence.’”

As part of Weird Weekend’s network, Prof. Sykes agreed to help study any DNA the Sumatra team might find and was able to give advice on how to ensure their findings would hold up.

“I’ve talked to Adam, Richard and Charles and I hope that I can offer advice about how, if they do find any organic remains, they must ensure that they are analysed by different laboratories, so that when the time comes to publish them, that will be an additional strength.”

It is this spirit of cooperation and support that Downes feels is so important for the future of the CFZ; working with university institutions and respected laboratories is crucial to their progress.

Dr Darren Naish and Max Blake gave a report on a stuffed lynx that can be dated to 1903 – making it the oldest modern lynx in Britain, and significantly predating the Dangerous Wild Animal Act of 1976, when a number of privately owned big cats were released into the wild rather than put down.

Naish and Blake are currently in the process of tracing the lynx’s exact origins using cutting-edge nuclear technology to analyse mineral isotopes present in the cat’s bones. This pioneering technique was first used in a criminal investigation into voodoo murders in March this year; their report will be published in the first issue of the CFZ’s new peer-reviewed journal.

Their research hit the front page of the *Western Morning News* that Saturday, with the headline “Big Cats are still Living in West: Experts have DNA proof”. Over the course of the weekend, Downes was bombarded with calls from at least eight national and local papers; and in the month following Weird Weekend, there were more than 10 big cat sightings reported in the press.

GEORGE NINNING

**ABOVE:** Max Blake and Dr Darren Naish with a stuffed lynx dating from 1903.

**RIGHT:** *Fortean Times* acquires a new reader.

# Jon sits at the centre, gently coordinating his grand plan

ForteanTimes
MADONNA MANIA!
THE SECRET GOSPEL OF MARK
LOOKING OVER JORDAN

GEORGE BINNING

Other presentations over the packed weekend included bug-breeder Nick Wadham on giant insects, and the limits thereof; intrepid journalist Matt Salusbury on the pygmy elephants of Kerala (**FT252:42–47; 263:25**); and John Hanson and Dawn Holloway on *Haunted Skies*, their continuing encyclopædia of over 40,000 UFO witness accounts spanning over 70 years.

But although the academic and media recognition is certainly encouraging, there is more to cryptozoology than science – Glen Vaudrey’s talk on the folkloric origins of the Scottish water-horse was a case in point.

Downes agreed. “Cryptozoology is so important,” he insisted, “because it’s a portmanteau discipline which brings in zoology, folklore and mythology, sociology, and dozens of other things. I think the world needs more of this: because when you have a world run by specialists who don’t know anything outside their particular subject, you end up with a very peculiar world!”

One real triumph of Weird Weekend and the CFZ is the establishment of an enthusiastic, multigenerational community with a passion for every aspect of cryptozoology. Jon sits at the centre, gently coordinating his grand plan and enjoying every minute of it.

“I’m an old hippie who believes that all you need is love, and we should all work together and have a good time and make things good. Half the people here come and speak for nothing and we are the only conference in the world that has little boys and girls dressed up as aliens dancing to a Hawkwind song… these kids, who come in every year and draw those pictures of dragons, will be going on expeditions in 10 years time.

“What went wrong with previous organisations is that they didn’t think of the future, and nearly every fortean organisation in the past has not survived the death of its local founder. I want to make sure that this one goes on after I die.”

This is a time when many cryptozoological riddles are on the brink of being solved and new technology has made a wider range of DNA available for analysis; at the same time, Boris Worm, a biology professor at Canada’s Dalhousie University and Camilo Mora of the University of Hawaii published claims in August that there could 8.8 million living species on Earth, of which only 1.2 million are properly described. It’s a study which throws up countless new questions; as a community, the Weird Weekenders appear to be thriving happily in their habitat. FT

**GEORGE BINNING** is a freelance journalist and avid fortean, interested in geometry and cereology. He produces idiotic zines and is a ‘prefect’ at the Idler Academy. georgebinning.wordpress.com.

# BATRACHIAN VELOCIPEDISTS

**ROBERT DAMON SCHNECK** considers two cases of frogs on bicycles and ponders the links between these odd amphibians and the paranormal.

GETTY IMAGES / AFP / PORNCHAI KITTIWONGSAKUL

One of the most famous amphibians of recent years is a female black-spotted frog named Nong Oui (see **FT236:12**).

One morning in March 2007, Mrs Tongsai Bumroongtai, a farmer's wife from Roi-en, Thailand, was awakened by a hen and saw "a frog standing nearby with a chick in its mouth". Instead of flinging a rock, she "looked into the frog's eyes and felt an instant connection. She knew she could commune with the frog. She told the frog, in no uncertain terms, perhaps as Moses had spoken to the pharaoh, to let the chick go; and it complied immediately. Ever since, Mrs Tongsai, has become very fond of Nong Oui, the miraculous frog; and has taken care of her like a member of the family."

Nong Oui ("little sister") first attracted attention when the spots on her belly were used to discover winning lottery numbers, but Mrs Tongsai "became overwhelmed with the large number of people who kept coming to ask for lucky numbers and had to leave her village." Now retired from prognostication, the frog pursues other interests.

"There is nothing more that she likes than to chill out on her toy Harley-Davidson," said Mrs Tongsai,[1] and photographs of Nong Oui astride the motorcycle, with a tympanum-to-tympanum grin on her face, have appeared in newspapers from the *Pattaya Daily News* to the *Daily Mail* (as shown above).

Frogs seldom ride two-wheelers outside of Muppet adventures or anthropomorphic taxidermy (stuffed animals in human poses), yet Nong Oui does it and – unlike her 19th-century predecessor described below – without starting a panic.

## MR FROG'S WILD RIDE

Encounters with giant bipedal frogs are rare in the United States and tend to be vague, now-you-see-it, now-you-don't affairs.[2] The "antediluvian monster" that materialised at Haddonfield, New Jersey, in the last week of 1897, however, came barrelling down the street on a bicycle in full daylight.

The frog was "monstrous, terrible, appalling", and its "great bulging eyes stood out of its head and its clawed feet gripped the pedals of the bicycle firmly and pressed on as though for dear life". Men paled at the sight, women shrieked, and children "turned tail and made way for the apparition". They "ran into ditches and climbed over fences in their haste to get away" and, while the frog might have enjoyed making people hop, there was no time to savour the irony; dogs were trying to snatch a mouthful of *cuisses de grenouille*, and a doughty cow lowered her head and charged the pond-bred interloper which "scorched on faster".

ITS CLAWED FEET GRIPPED THE PEDALS FIRMLY AND PRESSED ON

It "almost drew a bullet from the gun of a huntsman in a field", but a posse of bicyclists appeared in hot pursuit of the frog and shouted at him to lower the weapon. Then the riders closed in.

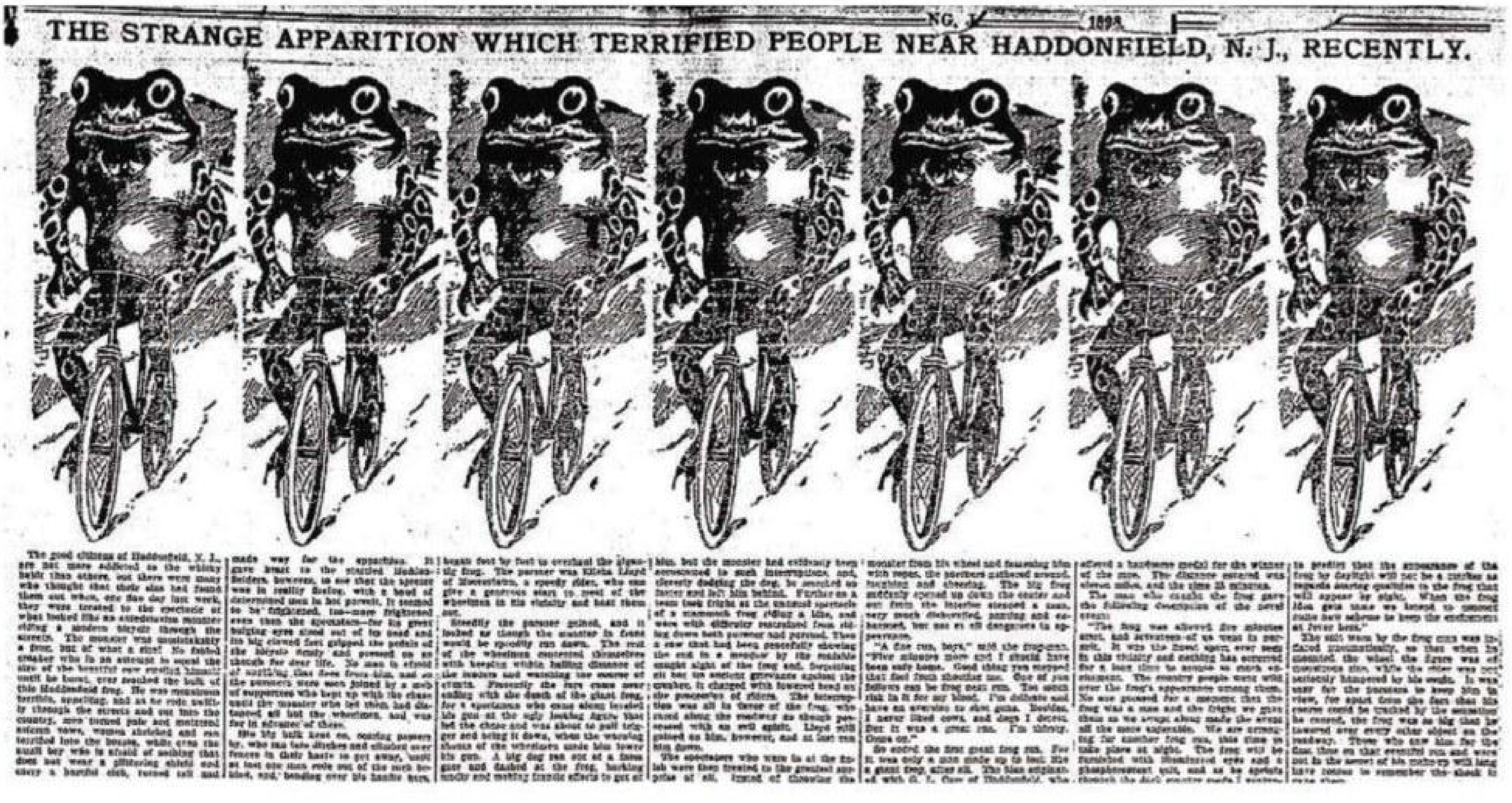
One of the wheelmen, Elisha Lloyd, overtook the furiously pedalling ranid, but instead "of throwing the monster from his wheel and fastening him with ropes", everyone dismounted. They gathered round the frog, which "suddenly opened up down the centre and out from the interior stepped a man, very much dishevelled, panting and exhausted". He congratulated everyone, suggested drinks and the "great frog run", a novelty race devised by GL Carr of Haddonfield, ended with refreshments.

Carr's idea was simple. Put a man in a frog-suit, which was "inflated pneumatically, so that when he mounted the wheel the figure was of monstrous size while the rider was not seriously hampered by his outfit." He was given a five-minute head start and the other cyclists, 17 in all, had 40 minutes to catch him. They followed the frog's progress by listening for screams and the racers had covered 11 miles (17.7km) in 35 minutes when Lloyd caught up. He received a medal and said, "It was the finest sport ever seen in this vicinity and nothing has occurred in a long time to arouse such excitement." The next run was planned for after dark when "The frog will be furnished with illuminated eyes and a phosphorescent suit, and… the frog by daylight will not be a marker to the frog than [*sic*] will appear at night."

No reference to a second race has been discovered and the only known account of the first one appeared at a time when newspapers were notorious for hoaxes.[3] Records show that Carr and Lloyd did live in the area, though,[4] and sporty young men of the period enjoyed odd competitions.[5]

Whatever the truth of the story, a question remains. With Roswell, New Mexico, and Point Pleasant, West Virginia, turning *their* sketchy, poorly documented, events into tourist attractions, why hasn't the Haddonfield chamber of commerce inaugurated an annual frog run?

Imagine a brisk December afternoon



THE STRANGE APPARITION WHICH TERRIFIED PEOPLE NEAR HADDONFIELD, N. J., RECENTLY.

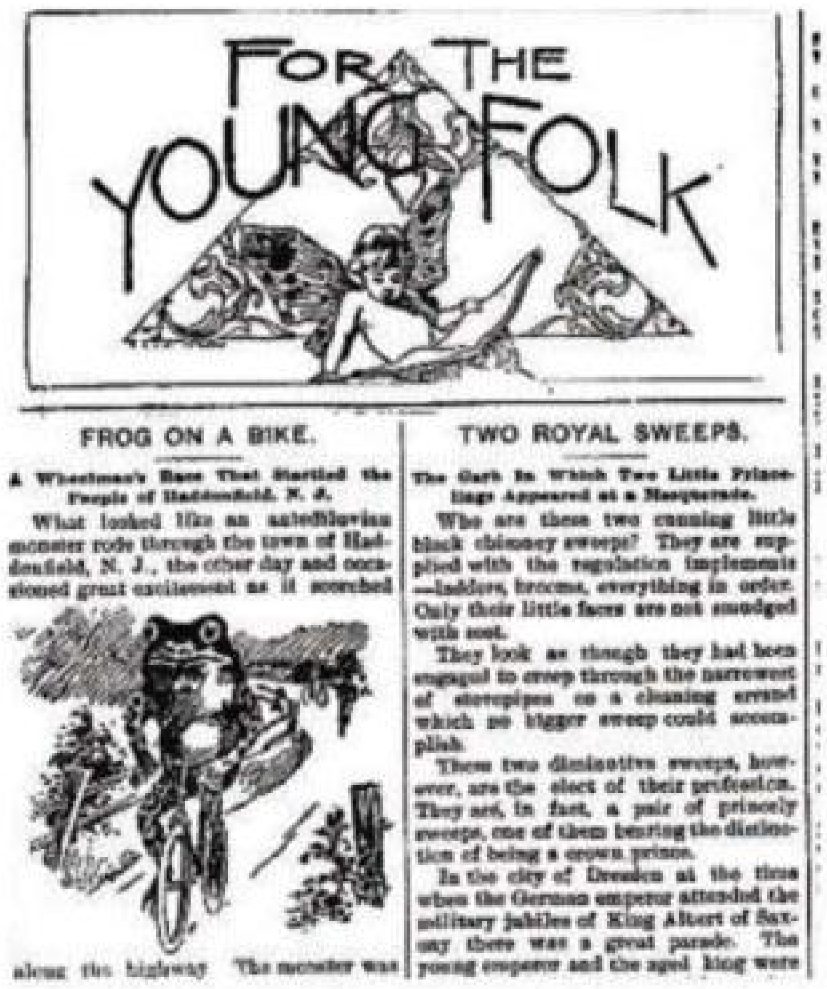
**ABOVE AND BELOW:** Coverage of the 1897 frog race in Haddonfield, New Jersey, from the *Syracuse Herald*, New York, and Ohio's *Newark Daily Advocate*.

downtown. The high school band is playing *Stars and Stripes Forever* while spectators cheer dozens of green, web-footed, goggle-eyed cyclists as they roll across the finish line. It's a Norman Rockwell scene, but with giant frogs.

## PARANORMAL BY NATURE?

Lottery predictions aside, there's nothing mysterious about Nong Oui or the inflatable racer, yet frogs and the paranormal have much in common.

Both are mutable. They thrive in places where distinctions blur and barriers dissolve, like the borders between life and death or land and water. Frogs express these characteristics physically, through metamorphosis, amphibiousness, and permeability, absorbing moisture directly through their skin[6] the way a poltergeist drops stones into a house without punching holes in the roof. They can even alter our perceptions: frogs by secreting hallucinogenic chemicals, and the paranormal through extraordinary experiences. Frogs blur distinctions between land and water, inside and outside, and, with their genders nearly identical, male and female. Even Kenneth Grahame's unambiguously masculine Mr Toad spends considerable time in women's clothing.



FOR THE YOUNG FOLK

FROG ON A BIKE.

A Wheelman's Race That Startled the People of Haddonfield, N. J.

What looked like an antediluvian monster rode through the town of Haddonfield, N. J., the other day and occasioned great excitement as it scorched along the highway. The monster was

TWO ROYAL SWEEPS.

The Garb In Which Two Little Princelings Appeared at a Masquerade.

Who are these two cunning little black chimney sweeps? They are supplied with the regulation implements—ladders, brooms, everything in order. Only their little faces are not smudged with soot.

They look as though they had been engaged to creep through the narrowest of stovepipes on a cleaning errand which no bigger sweep could accomplish.

These two diminutive sweeps, however, are the elect of their profession. They are, in fact, a pair of princely sweeps, one of them bearing the distinction of being a crown prince.

In the city of Dresden at the time when the German emperor attended the military jubilee of King Albert of Saxony there was a great parade. The young emperor and the aged king were

Their superficial resemblance to humans also inspires mixed feelings. Nong Oui is charming and Kermit the Frog amusing, but darker possibilities are explored in HP Lovecraft's *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (1936), and modern folklore about inbred families with "froggish" features in Connecticut and the Midwest.[7]

Perhaps the traditional association between tailless amphibians, fortean phenomena, witchcraft, and fairy tales is the result of a natural affinity. Maybe that's also why a frog in a sack suit and pince-nez glasses looks like a certain writer from Albany. **FT**

This article was prepared with the generous help of Mr and Mrs Terry Colvin, and researchers at the Haddonfield and Camden County historical societies.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**ROBERT SCHNECK** is a regular *FT* contributer and author of *The President's Vampire: Strange-but-True Tales of the U.S.A.* (Anomalist/Barnes & Noble). He collects odd and obscure Americana and can be reached at presidentsvampire@earthlink.com.

### NOTES AND SOURCES

**1** http://bit.ly/qkKC5P (pattayamail.com); http://bit.ly/c2rayY (dailymail.co.uk).

**2** The best-known sightings of giant amphibian/reptilian bipeds in the US have taken place along the Little Miami River at Loveland, Ohio. In 1955, a witness claimed to see three misshapen frog-faced creatures standing together, one of which was holding a bar that gave off sparks. Since then there have been almost half a dozen alleged encounters with the "Loveland Frog" or "Loveland Lizard", a wrinkled frog-like monster standing between 3–4ft (90cm–1.2m) tall. It is variously described as a cryptid, a hoax, and a legend inspired by an escaped lizard.

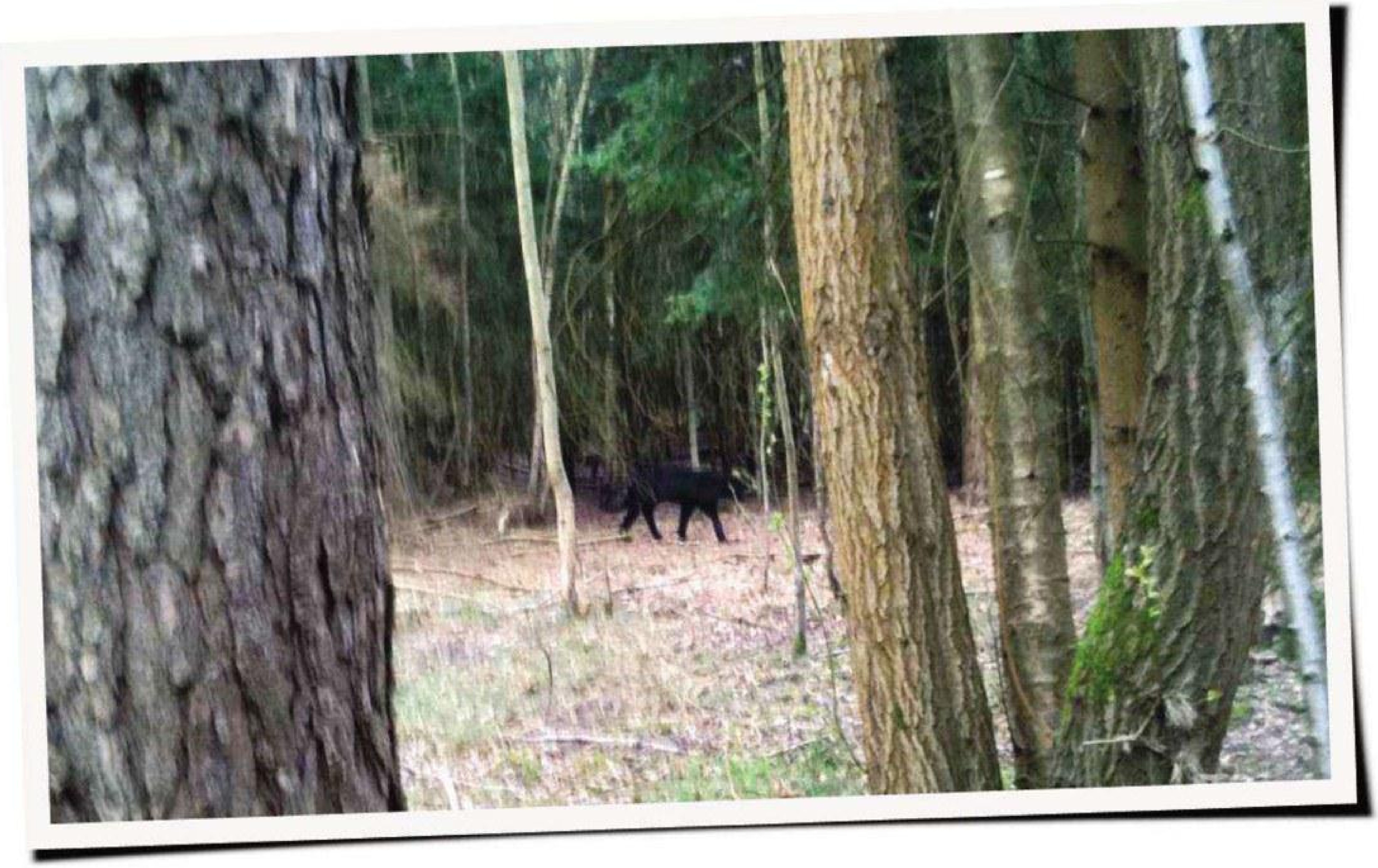
**3** "The Strange Apparition Which Terrified People Near Haddonfield, N.J., Recently", *Syracuse Herald* (New York), 2 Jan 1898. Syracuse is over 200 miles (320km) from the reported event. A simplified version of the *Herald* story, called *Frog on a Bike*, was printed in the children's section of the *Newark Daily Advocate* (Ohio), 19 Feb 1898.

**4** Carr is listed as a resident of Haddonfield in the 1895 and 1901 town *Directory*. According to the 1900 census, he was born in October 1873, making him 24 years old in 1897. Lloyd reportedly lived at Moorestown, New Jersey, and is mentioned as a participant in two other bicycle races by the *Bucks County Gazette* (Pennsylvania), 15 July, 9 Sep 1897.

**5** *The National Police Gazette*, a men's magazine dedicated to crime, scandals, and sports, encouraged peculiar contests, offering championship belts for everything from "teeth-lifting" (Prof. John Whitman "lifted 225 pounds [100kg] with his teeth") to one-legged clog dancing. Gene & Jayne Barry Smith, ed: *The Police Gazette*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1972, pp130, 146.

**6** One species of frog, *Barbourula kalimantanensi*, has no lungs and breathes through its skin: http://usat.ly/aK2KiT (usatoday.com).

**7** See Joseph A Citro: *Weird New England*, Sterling, New York, 2005, pp66–67; *The Midwest* (T Peter Park: "The 'Lincoln Legend': A 'Forme Fruste' Urban Legend, www.anomalist.com/features/lincolnlg.html.



RUSSELL BUTT

# PAWS FOR THOUGHT

**MERRILY HARPUR** surveys the Alien Big Cat (ABC) scene over the last couple of years. Encounters with these mysterious out-of-place felids have become increasingly common and increasingly credible, with wildlife experts and TV celebrities coming out on the side of a big cat presence in Britain – but the animals themselves remain as elusive as ever...

Fifty years since the first cat-flap – the 'Surrey puma' scare of the 1960s – there has been one big, potentially exciting, change in ABC research: people are now routinely armed with cameras in their mobile phones. So where are the photos?

One Surrey cyclist did manage a snap (above). He nearly "fell off his bike" when he saw a black panther in woodlands near Shepperton in March this year. He said: "I was just coming to the junction with Stonehill Road, and I saw something moving in the woods to my left. It was about the size of a big Labrador, but moved like a cat. I got my phone out my back pocket and took a photo from behind a tree, but my hands were shaking like mad. No sooner had I taken it, it slunk off into the trees and I cycled back the long way, through Chobham – I didn't want to go the other way." (*Surrey Herald*, 29 Mar 2011)

> "I would have taken a picture, but it was all over in a minute..."

Shaking hands is one explanation for the lack of conclusive evidence – but Tim Ellis's explanation was more typical. He spotted an ABC disappearing into woods just two metres (6ft 7in) from his car. He said: "I would have taken a picture on my phone, but it was the sheer surprise and it was all over in a minute." He reversed the car, but too late – the animal had gone. (*The Citizen* (Gloucester), 21 Oct 2010)

It seems the fascination of seeing such a creature can drive every other thought from the mind – including the thought of taking a photo. A week after Tim's encounter, Ian Giles was strolling on Midhurst Common in West Sussex with his mother and girlfriend when they saw what they first thought was a large black dog lying amongst some scrub – until it sat up and had a look around. At this point, there was no doubt what it was – a big cat with "a long sleek body and long thin tail looping up at the end. We looked at each other thinking, are we seeing this? Then it got up and disappeared into the trees." Ian had his mobile phone/camera in his pocket, yet none of them thought to get a picture. "It just never entered our minds," he said. (BCIB via Derek Bilston, Sussex Big Cat Watch; *Midhurst and Petworth Observer*, 28 Oct 2010)

It is disastrous, of course, to take your eyes off an ABC to look for a camera. Ryan was outside his garage in Dartford in Kent and noticed what he thought was a black bin bag dumped on the road near a parked car. "But after unlocking my garage I noticed a slight movement in the corner of my eye and couldn't believe it when I realised it was a big cat. It had rounded ears and was looking straight at me with white, almost triangle-shaped eyes. I started to walk backwards, as the size of its paws alone looked like it could take you out with one swipe." He went into the house for his camera, but alas... "On [my] returning to take a picture, the cat had gone." (BCIB via http://bigcatsinkent.org, 9 June 2010)

In addition to the cameras in people's pockets, trail cams – cameras which are triggered by movement – have become more available and cheaper, and in 2010 the *Big Cats In Britain* research group (BCIB) initiated a project to set cameras in as many ABC hotspots as possible. Currently there are over 48 cameras recording the wildlife that passes. The interesting (but unfortunately ABC-free) results can be viewed at http://bit.ly/n2T1F9 (bigcatsinbritaintriggercamerablog.blogspot.com).

## A VERY BRITISH MYSTERY

But while a convincing series of photos or films of British big cats has yet to appear, ABCs remain the most well-attested mystery in Britain. Even visitors to this country notice them. Denis, an American tourist, was travelling through Oxfordshire on a National Express coach. "It was late at night, and our coach driver started circling a large roundabout just outside the British town of Banbury. More and more of the passengers began to point excitedly through their windows and we could all plainly see an adult lynx in the light cast from the coach as it went around the grassy roundabout. Eventually we made another circuit only to find the animal gone..."

The creature was bigger than a German shepherd (Alsatian) dog, and a dark beige colour; it had the classic tufted ears of a lynx, but, confusingly, had a tail long enough to "swish" – whereas lynx tails are barely more than stubs. Perhaps the cat too, was uncertain of its own origin, for "we could see it looking confused and baring its teeth. We all agreed it was hissing at us but there was no way to actually hear it through the windows." Denis wrote, "I admit to feeling a bit spooky about it," although the coach driver was apparently unfazed, telling his passengers that in the 1960s and 70s these animals were quite popular but the government banned them, so rather than destroy them their owners let them loose to let nature take its course. (BCIB report 28 Jan 2010)

Sightings of ABCs have continued unabated over the past two years – this round-up has the space only for a tiny fraction of the hundreds reported – and the elements of mystery surrounding them have continued unsolved. They are mysteries neatly summed up by Denis's 'lynx': the sudden anomaly in high relief against the backdrop of quotidian reality, its inconsistent physical features, its sudden disappearance, the spookiness, and inevitably the stock 'explanation': that these creatures descend from captives escaped or released as a result of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act of 1976. Unfortunately, it is an explanation that does not account for the ubiquity and uncatchability of these creatures, or the overwhelming numbers of pure black ABCs (amongst the big cats only leopards and jaguars have a rare black form, commonly referred to as "black panthers") along with the absence of reports of conventionally spotted leopards.

**ABOVE:** Some of the critters captured by BCIB trigger-cams; a fox in Kent, a pheasant in Gloucestershire, a muntjac in Warwickshire and a badger in Surrey; but, typically, not a big cat to be seen!

The glimpse of a black ABC has become almost routine in some parts of the country. Scotland provides many examples. In January this year, an alarmed witness contacted the *Big Cats In Britain* research group (www.bigcatsinbritain.org) to describe a close ABC encounter at Dunfermline station. "I had pulled into the car park to take a phone call on my mobile, when I became aware of something moving in the bushes about five to eight feet [1.5–2.4m] in front on my car. A large panther-like black cat appeared and seemed to be foraging for something. It was about the height of an Alsatian dog, maybe taller, but longer in the body than a dog. Its tail was long and thin and curved at the end. I watched it for a minute in the light of the lamp post, not quite believing what I was seeing. I then switched on my headlights, which seemed to startle it. It looked directly towards the light for a minute before quickly moving off towards the left. I switched off my lights and could see it for a minute or two further along before it disappeared." (BCIB report, May 2011 via Bob Wallace)

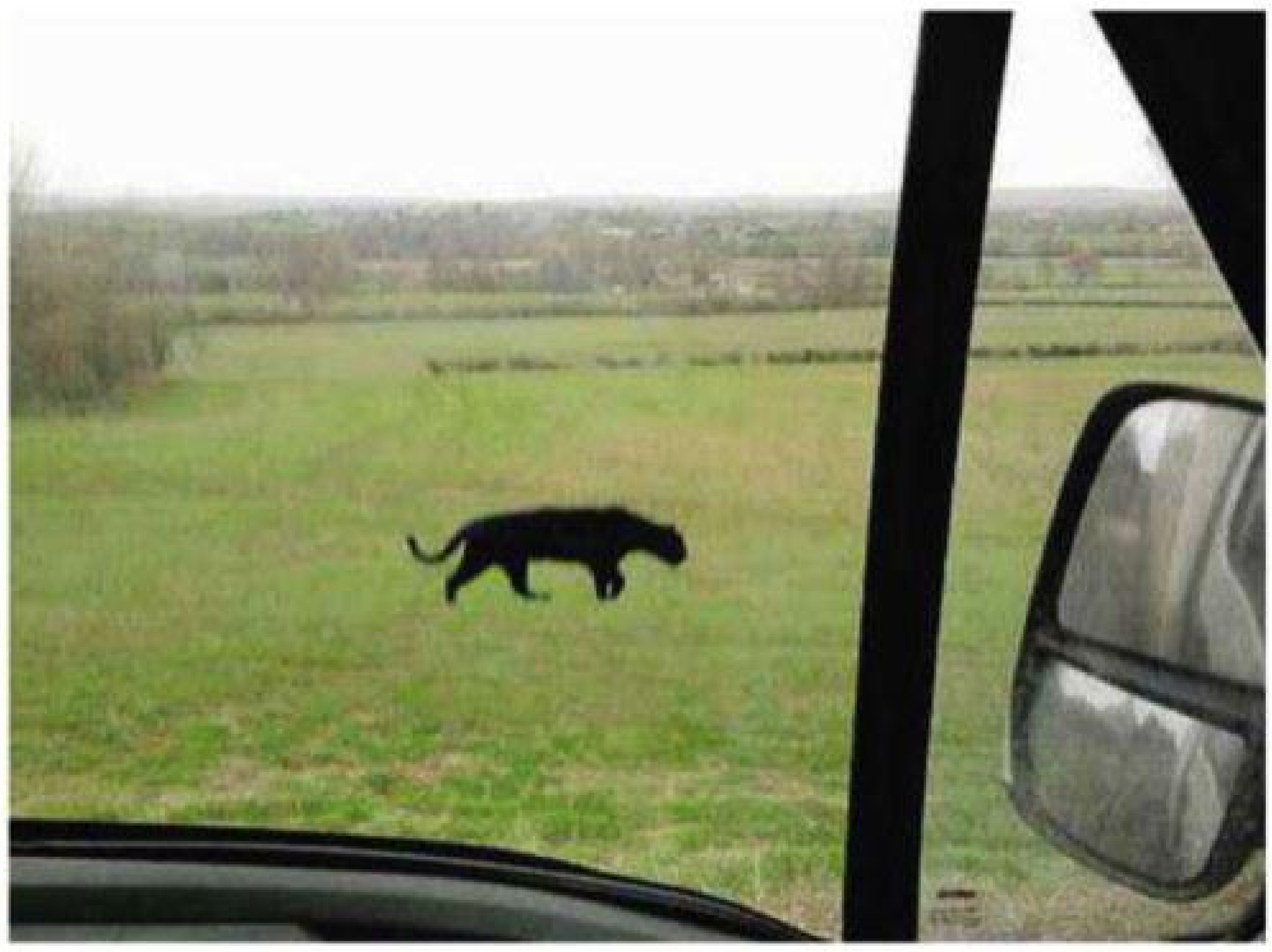
It is first-hand reports such as these – the honest evidence of reliable witnesses – that still forms the best evidence for ABCs. Many such witnesses are country people, well used to seeing the usual native fauna. Dustin Pitman's credentials, for instance, were impeccable: "I have been shooting since I was 12 and also involved in keepering, and I know that what I saw was not a fox or a stray dog, or other livestock..." He and his son were in Silent Valley, near Ebbw Vale in Gwent, "on a farmer's land where I shoot regularly", he wrote. "As we approached the pond at the top I lit up the bank to my right with the lamp. There was a creature that I can only describe as a large black cat looking at us about 20 yards to my right. It was about 2ft 6in [75cm] tall and 4ft [1.2m] long and with a tail as long as its body. It turned, cleared the fence with a single bound and bounced up the hill, then paused, looked back and then moved across the side of the hill and over the top out of sight." (BCIB report 15 Dec 2009)

Likewise, Richard Hunter should know a big cat when he sees one – he apparently keeps lynxes himself. He had been visiting South Lakes Zoo, near Dalton-in-Furness in Cumbria, with his wife and son, and they were returning to their car when all three saw a black big cat walking up the field about 100ft (30m) away. He said: "It was walking in a kind of slinky way but looked relaxed. It looked round and we got a good side view of its body – this is when we realised exactly what we were looking at, and without any doubt it was a black panther. I was trying to get my phone out of my pocket to take a photo but by the time I'd got it out it was over the brow of the hill. I ran up over the brow to try and get a picture but it had disappeared. I looked around the fields for about half an hour but didn't see it again."

The creature was "about the size of a large dog, slender but muscular, with rounded

ALL IMAGES : WWW.BIGCATSINBRITAIN.ORG/

GLOUCESTERSHIRE MEDIA



**ABOVE LEFT:** Builder Tim Ellis, who saw an ABC just two metres from his car while driving in Gloucestershire. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A photograph of a 'black panther' was emailed to BCIB on 4 Feb 2011, supposedly seen at Cemetery Hill, Ilminster, Somerset. It was a picturesque representation concocted on computer with a stock photo of a black jaguar. When this hoax was pointed out, the sender replied: "I didn't take the picture or see it. It was a mate. Please excuse my brevity."

ears and a huge tail – really thick and about one and a half times the length of its body, sloping down and curling up at the end." The experience struck the Hunter family in the same way that it strikes many such witnesses: "It was an amazing sight that will never be forgotten." (BCIB report, 2 Jun 2010)

## CATS ON THE ROAD

So far so normal. But British ABCs indulge in behavioural oddities which set them apart from conventional zoo animals, and perhaps suggest a different provenance for them. In an incident which delightfully recalls the Shooters Hill Cheetah which leaped over a police car in 1963, and the Surrey Puma which jumped over the head of a woman tending her horses in the 1970s, a Sussex woman rang the police after a black cat "about the size of a Great Dane" leapt over her in July last year. She spotted the huge animal on Rusper Road playing fields in Crawley, saying to the local paper: "A big cat was just lying there. I didn't see it immediately. It jumped up and I ducked as it came flying over the top of me and went into another field… it scared the hell out of me. It was jet black and definitely a cat. I'm 5ft 4in [1.6m] and its back legs were as tall as my hip." (http://bit.ly/qMRxkA (thisissussex.co.uk), 31 July 2010)

Vikki Ward's ABC, far from flying, was reluctant even to move. She was driving near North Elmham, Norfolk, when an oncoming car flashed its headlights at her. "As I rounded the last corner on to a long stretch of road, I could see something lying in the road some distance away. I slowed down and put my headlights on full. I could see it was black and not moving, and as I got closer – approximately 14ft [4.3m] away – it stood up. It was a cat, black and about the same size as my golden retriever dog. At this point, a very long tail flicked into the air. It turned its head, eyes bright amber in my lights, then walked into the field parallel to my car with no urgency or injury. I assumed it had been hit, which is why it was lying in the road but [it] showed no evidence of this. I found this very scary, to be honest. The cat showed no fear of its surroundings or my car." (BCIB report, 29 Apr 2010)

> "It came flying over the top of me and went into another field..."

'Charles' also encountered a big cat lying in the road, but this one was – unusually – a puma. He contacted BCIB's Rik Snook, writing: "As I stopped the car, the animal stood up and jumped into the bushes. I thought I was seeing things. It was a huge cat. It was a sandy colour with no spots, but had big back legs and a very long tail which had a black tip at the end of it. (http://bigcatsinkent.org 15 Aug 2011)

Lying around in roads couldn't be more relaxed, but when ABCs do move it's often with extraordinary speed. "We were returning from a holiday in Eire, on our way to Belfast ferry port" one witness wrote, "and were at Tamlaght, east of Enniskillen, Ulster. It was dark, but simultaneously we both became aware of a large animal to the left-hand side of the vehicle which was about to run in front of us. We both braced ourselves for the inevitable impact, but this did not occur, because the animal moved at a speed which astonished us. In the glare of our headlights we were both in no doubt as to what we had seen – a large black cat about the size of a giant breed dog." (BCIB report, June 2009)

Cars do occasionally seem to hit ABCs, leaving them apparently unhurt – and just as uncatchable. On 7 October 2010, 'Wayne' described just such an incident:

"I was travelling to work along the Chevington road towards the A1 at about 7.40pm. Approximately 300 yards [275m] from the junction, I saw what I can only describe as a big cat like a puma. There was a Rover about 40 yards [37m] in front of me at the time. The cat ran out from the field over the road – too late for the Rover to brake, which collided with the cat. It was a sandy/light golden colour, about three and a half to four feet [1–1.2m] long. It was possibly just over two feet [60cm] high and seemed to keep quite low to the ground as it crossed the road. The cat then ran on to the field [on] the other side of the road.

"The Rover braked hard and pulled up with me pulling up behind it. I got out and walked over and spoke to the driver who was examining the front of his car. It was quite clearly damaged – its headlights and grille smashed. I asked what had happened even though I knew already. He replied, "A big cat ran into the front of me." Returning home next morning, I drove back to the spot and parked up, fully expecting to see a dead big cat; but there was nothing to be seen. Call me bonkers, as many did, but I know what I saw – and so did the bloke in the Rover. I've often wondered what he put on his insurance claim form…." (BCIB report, Oct 2010 via Ian Bond)

Another puma-like cat was apparently hit by a car in Dunfermline, Scotland, but also disappeared completely after the collision. Martyn and Yvette Lovelock, of Dean Acres, were shocked when an animal bolted across the A907 Alloa to Blairhall Road, near Devilla Forest, in December 2009. Yvette said, "It was pitch black and no-one else was on the road. All of a sudden, this thing came out from the left side of the road – my adrenaline was running because I knew it was a big cat. It was a sandy-coloured cat. It ran that fast in front of us my husband thought it was a deer at first but I had a better look at it and could see a tail. Deer bound, but this thing was running flat along the ground." They estimated that they had hit the beast at around 50mph. The couple turned their car around to drive back to the spot where the impact happened but found no trace of any injured animal. (BCIB report; http://bit.ly/76XmBz (dunfermlinepress.com))

Mary Brown from Banchory near Aberdeen had the same unnerving experience. "My son was in the car with me. We both saw a big cat hit the car in front, which swerved, and then it hit our car. Both cars stopped and we spent ages trying to find the injured animal but there was nothing – and no blood on the car or road as you would expect from such an impact." (*pers. comm.* 3 Mar 2009)

## CAT CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Yet while they remain extraordinarily elusive when it comes to tangible evidence, they often seem – contrarily – to court attention. One woman was training her six-husky racing team early one morning in October 2010, in Swinley Forest in prime 'Surrey Puma" country between Bracknell and Bagshot. She was going along at a fair lick, about 15mph (24km/h), when she became aware of her lead dog reacting to something in the forest to her side. Suddenly, a very large cat appeared out of the trees and ran ahead of her for about 30 to 40 yards (27–37m). It was as tall as her huskies but longer, dark sandy grey with a long thick tail. It ran gracefully and was "most definitely a cat". (BCIB report via Gary Ridley, 29 Nov 2010)

A Hampshire witness watched an ABC for half a minute as it approached and passed two feet (60cm) from her car window. It was midday and she was driving near Ropley when she spotted the creature trotting along the road. At first, she thought it was a dog, but as it got closer she realised it was a cat. She slowed the car and stopped, whereupon the ABC "crossed right in front of my car and disappeared through a hedgerow to the side of me". The coat was "black and very shiny. The ears were as pointed but smaller in proportion to the head than a domestic cat." (BCIB report, 9 July 2010) Unknown to her at the time, there had been a sighting of what the press called the "Beast of Ropley" the previous January. Darren Wooldridge, an Iceland delivery driver, had just finished work when he saw the creature emerge from the side of a house, leap over a ditch just 30 yards (27m) in front of him and disappear into a hedge. "It was very muscular, 2ft [60cm] tall at the shoulders, with dark fur and a metre-long tail. It was a shock to see it. I just thought what the hell is that? I slammed on the brakes, as I wanted to get a second look at it. I just couldn't believe what I had seen. It was definitely a big cat and a powerful looking animal." (*Hampshire Chronicle*, 20 Jan 2010)

Two young women returning to their home in Dursley, Gloucestershire, at 2.30am after clubbing, were inspected even more closely by an ABC. As the taxi arrived in the drive of their house, it was circled by a big black panther. They described the tail as being as long as the body and the eyes being yellow slits. They waited till it went and then got out. As they did so, it returned, they bolted back into the taxi, and the cat went around the car again. (BBC Gloucester, 22 Jan 2011, via Rick Minter, BCIB)

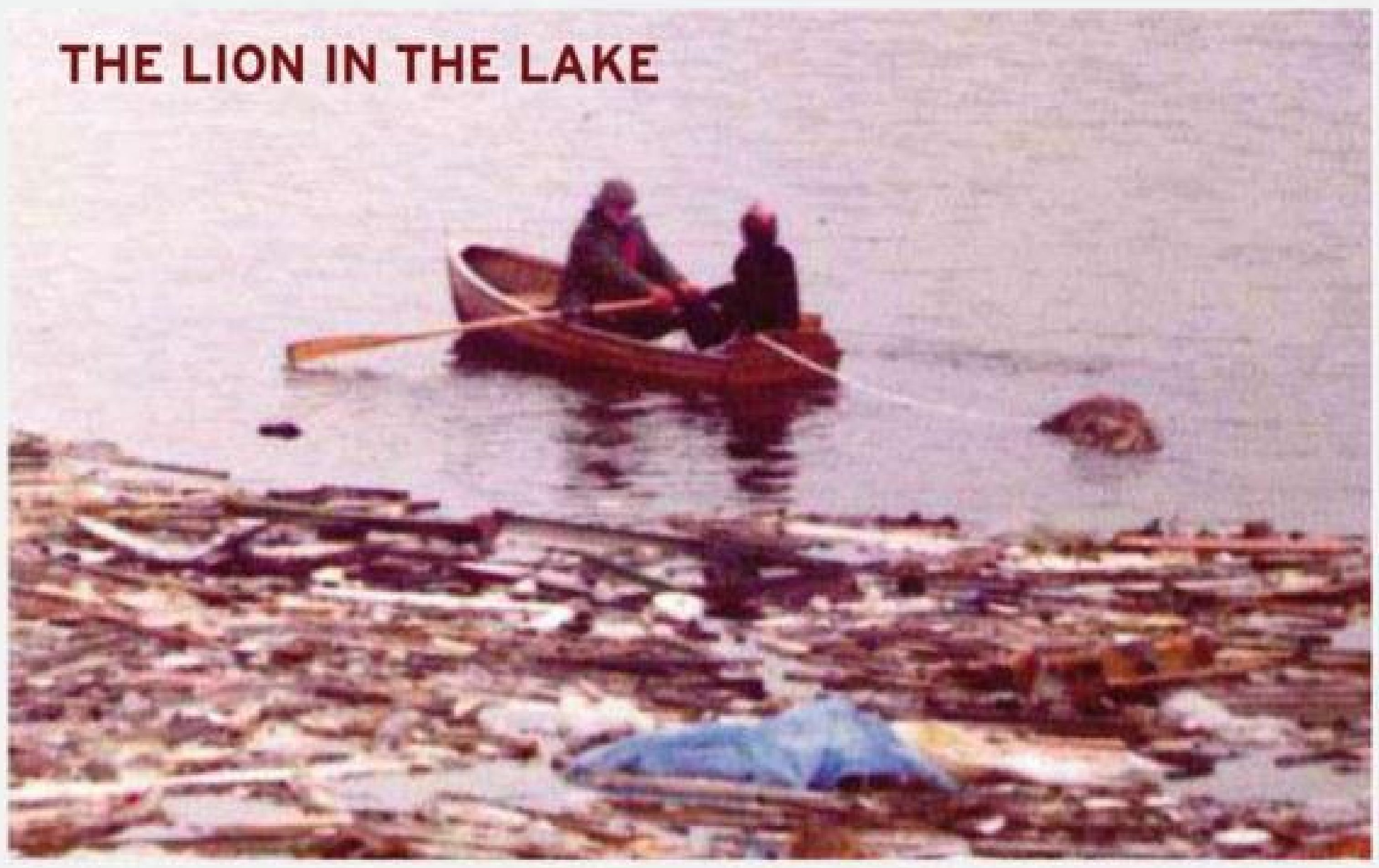
For ABC seekers, this is the most frustrating aspect of the creatures: they can be as unpredictably unafraid as they are normally elusive. The ABC that Darren met, for example, seemed almost to play hide-and-seek with him. He was walking a local rapeseed field, near Whitwick, Leicestershire, shooting vermin for the farmer. "Two partridge got up and flew to my right, I viewed them gliding just above the tops of the rape when I saw something moving right next to the black water reservoir at the side of the hedge. A large black cat, ears wider apart on the head than a domestic cat, and rounded at the top instead of pointed, came around the tree, arched its back down, slid under the blackthorn bushes and dropped into the ditch.

"I thought to myself, 'What the hell was that?' – because measured against the height of the reservoir edge it would have been at least 26in [66cm] tall. I quickly walked over, but nothing was there. I checked the ditch, flicking both left and right sides of the hedge to see if anything came out. Nothing! It had vanished. Then it appeared again, out the left side of the hedge, towards a gate. It saw me and quickly darted back in through some blackberry bushes. I ran down to that end again, but again couldn't see it." (BCIB report, 13 May 2010)

Dirk Van Der Werff described a similar game of hide-and-seek with an ABC. He had been driving near Trimdon village in Durham and wrote: "As I saw the old railway bridge in front of me, it perfectly framed a huge black cat with a tail almost as long as its body, walking quickly across the road. When I reached the spot, I stopped the car, hoping to see the panther (for that is most certainly what I saw) going across the field where there was a gap in the hedge. I couldn't see it from the car, and ran across the road in case it had headed off to the left or to the right in the field. I couldn't see it there either, but stood for a minute or so hoping to spot it. What I didn't realise was that I was standing next to a ditch in front of the hawthorn hedge and as I turned to head back to the car my eye caught sight of the creature lying lengthways in the ditch right next to me.

"I stood as still as I could... and the big cat turned its head and looked straight at me. After what seemed an age, I started to move backwards, very gingerly and very slowly, until I was in the middle of the road, and then turned and jumped in the car. It didn't make any move or a threatening gesture to me and stood

## THE LION IN THE LAKE



Deep in the most distant annals of ABC research has long lurked a reference to a dead lion found in a flooded quarry near St Helens in Lancashire in the 1970s (*FT* had it as 20 May 1980 – **FT167:30**), but no further details have ever come to light. Until now.

The mystery of how it got there was solved thanks to those posting on the St Helens forum (sthelens-connect.net) who had long memories and old photos. Though why two men in a boat pulled it out again, and what they did with it then, remains unknown.

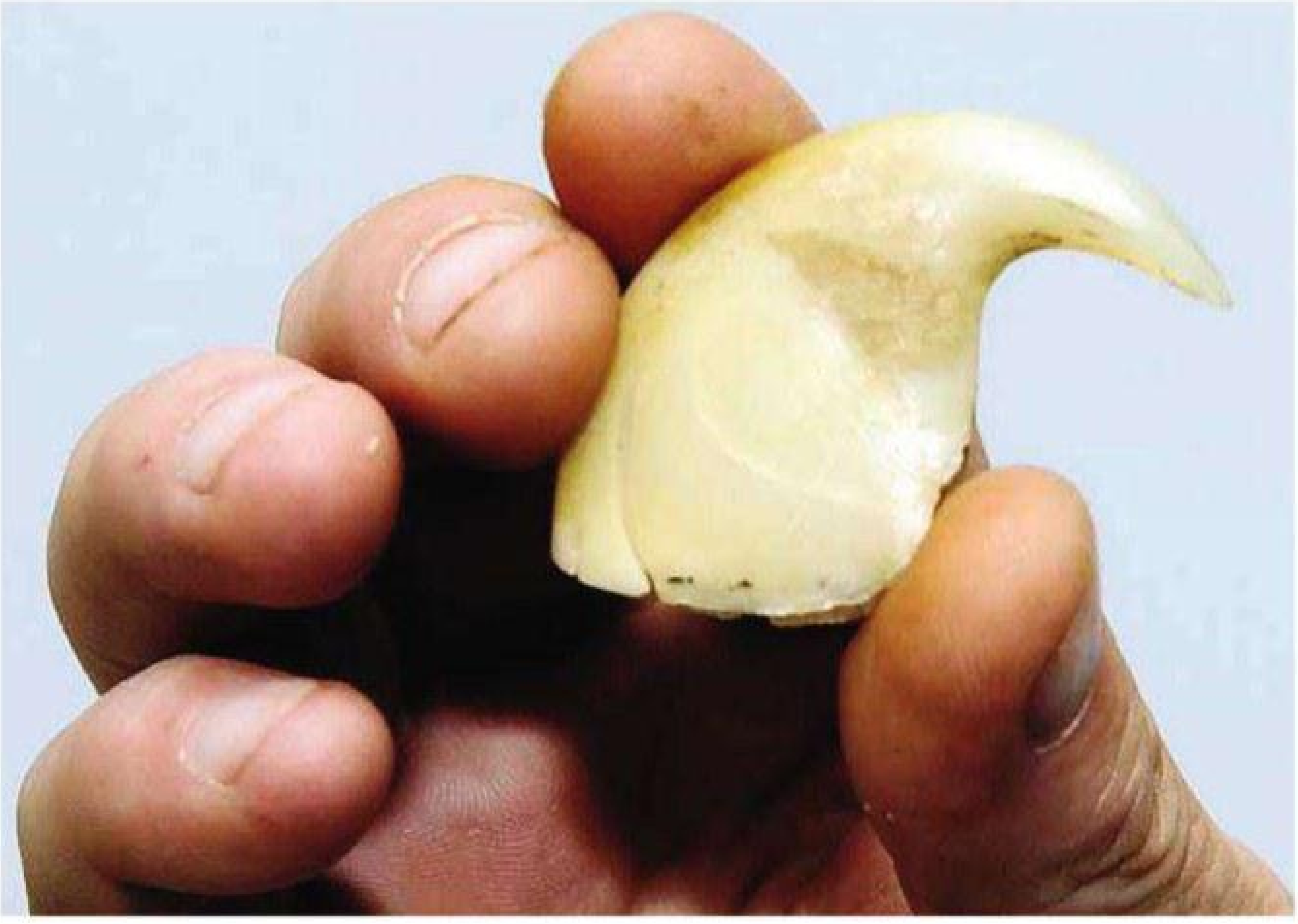
**6 SEPT 2009 BY JJC:** Looking through some of me Dad's old photos, I found some of the recovery of a lion (dead of course) from the clegg/clay hole in the mid to late 1970s. Does anyone remember how the body got there?

**11 JAN 2010 BY LEEROY:** The story went along the lines that a circus that came to St Helens and dumped the lion in the clegg following its death. Do you really have pictures of this?

**11 JAN 2010 BY JJC:** Dad's got photos of men in a boat towing the carcass across the clegg, you can clearly see its mane. I actually remember watching them.

**11 JAN 2010 BY PREDATOR:** This is a blast from the past... My father's skip hire business hired a skip to the circus for general waste etc. I was that man who bulldozed it into the clegg as you call it (all I called it was the tip, but I do remember the water was very blue at first).

I would have been around 21 years old at the time. I was there over 3 or 4 years filling it in. What I do know is it was very deep, around 81ft [25m] in places... I know even to this day where I shoved the lion in.



WISHAW PRESS

**ABOVE:** There have been numerous sightings of a 'panther' roaming the area around Wishaw, North Lanarkshire, but when local dog-walker Angus Richie produced this large claw, dug up by his dog Jill on Greenhead Moss, it seemed to confirm what locals have been reporting for years.

its ground. I started the car straight up and headed back to town… I had a camera with me, but it never once entered my head to get a photograph. I was too excited and too frightened to go back once I was in the safety of the car." (BCIB report, via Ian Bond, 26 Feb 2010)

But British ABCs' behavioural oddities are not the end of their peculiarities. Some of them display a range of colours and shapes that it is difficult to ascribe to any known species of big cat. The animal that Mr Hugh Wilkin saw when he was travelling along the Walpole Road area of south Cambridge on his electric bike last September was a case in point. He came to within 5–10ft (1.5–3m) of the creature and was in no doubt that it was a big cat. It was about 2ft 6in (75cm) high, and about 2ft 9in (85cm) long, and a very dark fawn colour. It had a very long tail with a black patch on the end. So far, so puma-like. However, its shape was more like a cheetah, for it had "a small head, a deep chest and long back legs". It sported another characteristic that witnesses often comment on – its coat was extremely shiny. "It looked very fit, not like the cats in the zoo." It ran off when some joggers came by. (BCIB, 14 Sept 2010)

Cycling gives you longer to observe an ABC, of course; Stuart Henderson and his daughter Sophie were on an early morning cycle ride in Mearns, near Stonehaven, Aberdeen, when they spotted a black cat bigger than a Labrador dog. The strange thing about it was that it had "a white chest and upright pointy ears" – features unknown in any big cat species. "We were wearing our bright cycling stuff" Mr Henderson said, "and it stopped and looked at us for about a minute and then ran back into the trees. I've never seen anything like it before – we were both fascinated." (http://bit.ly/pf5Ytm (www.pressandjournal.co.uk), 20 Oct 2010)

If that was confusing, what assorted species was the cat which turned up in a garden in Coleford, Gloucestershire? This was observed from 50 yards (45m) away for four or five minutes. During this time, a wild rabbit turned up near it and was ignored by the cat, though this enabled the witness better to estimate the size of the ABC. It was "about the size of an adult Alsatian, maybe slightly longer. It was a golden ginger colour with no markings on its body. It had tufted ears but its tail was long with black ring markings from tip to base." The animal "casually walked across the garden, stopped, looked at me for few moments, then sprayed near a bush before walking off". (BCIB, 23 July 2010)

## MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

Valerie Charlton's two sightings caused her to think differently about the ABC phenomenon. "One November evening in 1998 at about five o'clock, I was driving with my neighbour Brian Lewis down Fernden Lane, an ancient and deeply set lane in West Sussex just over the Surrey border on the outskirts of Haslemere. It was dusk and I was driving fairly slowly when a black creature the size of a large dog came out of the trees on the right and loped across the road about five yards (4.6m) in front of the car. For a split second, I thought it was a black Labrador – but this creature moved like a cat, had the long curled tail of a big cat, and a short head carried lower than its shoulders. Brian and I were both startled and said things like, "What the heck was that?" We decided it must have been the Surrey Panther.

"A few weeks later, I had just come off the A3 and was driving through the village of Milford on the A283 at around eleven at night. There were houses on either side of the road, which was well lit with streetlights. Again from the right hand side of the road but perhaps 20 yards [18m] ahead of me I saw a panther-like black cat trot cross the road and disappear into a garden. A second later as I drove past the spot, there was no sign of it.

"Until recently I believed that these were just arbitrary sightings of a rare animal whose presence in the British countryside had yet to be explained. I believed I had seen, at each sighting, a 'real' animal in the literal sense but the more I hear about 'Big Cat' sightings I realise that while they are materially real they are also mysterious. On both occasions, mine was the only car on the road and the creature would have heard and seen me coming, so why did it choose to cross in front of me in an unhurried way?" (*Pers. comm.*, 9 Apr 2010)

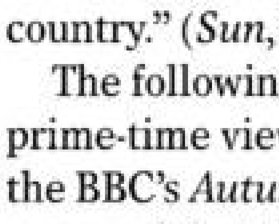
Other witnesses, too, have felt an existential question hanging over their encounter. Milkman Ian Coward of Hempsted, Gloucester, was delivering milk in Kaskelot Way at 2.50am on 19 October 2010 when the house's security light came on. To his amazement, he saw a huge cat in the sudden illumination standing in the homeowner's pumpkin patch by the side of the house. It was the size of a German shepherd dog. "I saw it in full light. It was so powerful. It had black and shiny fur like boot polish… It had massive green eyes but it was the size of its head that shocked me. It stared me in the eyes and opened its mouth to let out a deep breath," he said. "It was not afraid at all. We looked at each other for a minute. It was the most amazing sight. Then it turned, made two giant leaps and it was gone." The milkman told local researcher Frank Tunbridge he was very moved by the experience, as it felt as though the cat was communicating with him before it ran off. (*The Citizen* (Gloucester), 21 Oct 2010)

ABCs have also received some celebrity endorsements. Ray Mears, the TV bushcraft expert, has encountered three in his explorations, according to the *Sun* in September last year, "and I know exactly what two of them were", the newspaper reported him as saying. "One was a jungle cat and the other was an American mountain lion. The third I saw for only a split second and couldn't make it out – but it was very big. I've also been sent film footage of big cats in Scotland which I believe to be genuine. They're roaming around the country." (*Sun*, 9 Sept 2010)

The following month, ABCs made it on to prime-time viewing. They were discussed on the BBC's *Autumnwatch* programme, and it emerged that the nation's most revered naturalist, Chris Packham, also believes they are roaming around the country. Kate Humble, on the other hand, suggested they could be "melanistic fallow deer". Hmm. It was left to wildlife photographer Charlie Hamilton-James, who made a television programme on the subject some years ago, to point out the problem of the blackness of the pelage, and the lack of spotted animals seen. It seemed he had succumbed to the fate that befalls all thoughtful researchers into the phenomenon, whether indoors or out of doors: "I spent a long time looking into it," he said, "and I ended up more confused than when I started." (http://bit.ly/oYDMxM [YouTube])

Whatever else they communicate, ABCs tell us something about the strangeness of the world we live in. FT

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**MERRILY HARPUR** is a freelance writer, cartoonist, and the author of *Mystery Big Cats* (Heart of Albion 2006). When not lounging in a deck chair laughing at her own jokes – which is what she calls work – she likes, if possible, to let others amuse her. Failing that, she goes fly-fishing, or writes poetry. She lives in Co. Roscommon, Ireland, and Dorset, England, where she runs an ABC website – wwwdorsetbigcats.org.

Website approved by Plain English Campaign

# Buying a new car?

## Don’t make the wrong choice!

## The website that helps you decide which new car to buy

### Expert reviews in plain English

New cars rated for practicality, performance, comfort, reliability, safety, value for money and running costs

### Detailed specifications

Facts and figures for every new car on sale in the UK, plus photos inside and out

### Easy-to-use search engine

Find your perfect car with our powerful matching engine

### Video test drives

We show you what each car is really like to drive and to own

### Tips & advice

Essential guides that help you save time and money

**carbuyer**.CO.UK
Helping you decide which car to buy

**www.carbuyer.co.uk** from the publishers of

Auto Express · expert REVIEWS · BIZARRE · VIZ · The World of Strange Phenomena Fortean Times

# Denmark's weird waters

**LARS THOMAS** describes some of the lesser-known denizens of Denmark's seas, lakes and waterways, from the killer pike of Copenhagen to the spooky guardian of Alling Creek... All pictures supplied by the author.

Denmark is a small and densely populated country, but with a lot of lakes and waterways. Most of them are quite small and shallow, but there is also a lot of coastline bordering the North Sea to the west and the more tranquil waters of the Kattegat and the Baltic Sea to the east. It is perhaps not the most obvious place to go monster-hunting, but Denmark is home to an amazing array of strange creatures disporting themselves with gay abandon – sometimes in the middle of the capital city of Copenhagen.

Cryptozoologically speaking, Denmark can also pride itself for being the home of Japetus Steenstrup, the first scientist to realise that the many stories of weird sea creatures and mysterious 'sea monks' were not the product of deranged and drunken sailors' imaginations running wild, but in fact observations of real, living creatures – giant squid.

## Small lakes – large monsters

Compared to the lakes of, say, Scotland or North America, where monsters are much more common and well known, Denmark's lakes are, with one or two exceptions, small and rather shallow. Under normal circumstances, they should not have room for a monster, let alone an entire population of an unknown species. Nevertheless, there are sightings from millponds hardly big enough for a swan to turn around in, tiny reservoirs, and even park lakes in the middle of Copenhagen.

This tiny lake is home to at least one genuine lake monster

**LEFT:** This fountain in front of Copenhagen's Town Hall features a lindorm and a bull locked in deadly battle.

Kildevældsparken, a small park just northeast of central Copenhagen, would seem to be the last place on Earth one would expect to experience anything strange or mysterious. It is a small, peaceful and rather cosy little park with a lake not much bigger than the average municipal swimming pool – but according to several eyewitnesses, this tiny lake is home to at least one genuine lake monster.

The creature's heyday was the 1970s. In those years, a number of people walking their dogs or just passing through the park in the early morning or early evening – especially in periods of very hot and still weather – saw something strange moving about in the little lake.

This meteorological information might seem insignificant, but it actually indicates that we might be dealing with a living creature. In hot weather, the oxygen content of water drops, and any animal living in it will experience breathing difficulties. In an attempt to alleviate this, the animals will move up towards the surface, where the oxygen levels are slightly higher. Naturally, this also makes them easier to see.

So what did people see? Most of the sightings were of something best described as a small upturned boat perhaps 2–3m [6ft 7in – 10ft] long (though two eyewitnesses claimed a length of 4–5m / 13ft – 16ft 5in), sailing back and forth across the lake, usually fast enough to create a small wave. These performances would last anything from a few seconds to several minutes, but all

**ABOVE:** Lake Sortedam in central Copenhagen has had whales swimming, plus UFO sightings, and a naked woman who emerged from it, claiming to have been left there by a spaceship. **BELOW:** The tiny lake in Kildevældsparken, in the eastern outskirts of Copenhagen, measures only a couple of hundred metres across, but strange creatures have been seen there and dogs have disappeared.

of them ended with the "boat" disappearing below the surface.

The back of a swimming animal is the obvious suggestion, or perhaps a floating tree-trunk combined with a soupçon of wild imagination. Both a distinct possibility. If it were a living creature, it probably wouldn't be something as large and dramatic as a dinosaur surviving from the Cretaceous. We're most likely dealing with a large pike, with equal parts of terror and imagination producing claims of something 3–4m (10–13ft) in length. A big pike could be responsible for a couple of the more dramatic sightings. Apparently, a couple of unlucky dog owners, letting their dogs take a swim in the lake, witnessed, to their horror, the water around the animals starting to bubble, and then the dogs disappearing – never to be seen again.

Most people would say that there is not much mystery about a big pike, but we are about to enter the realm of the very strange. The Kildevældsparken monster hasn't been seen since the early 1980s, but things have taken a somewhat sinister turn since then. In the summer of 1999, a young couple sneaked into the park one night for a late and naughty swim. The guy gave up – he was too drunk. The girl was still game, though, so she dumped her clothes and went in. And to the sound of her splashing, he fell asleep.

When he awoke it was light. One or two people were out walking their dogs in the park. But the girlfriend? Well, her clothes were there, but not the slightest trace of her – and, despite an intensive search, she was never seen or heard from again.

This story has all the makings of an urban legend. I have never been able to trace its source, and I have since heard several variations of it from various small lakes and parks in Copenhagen.

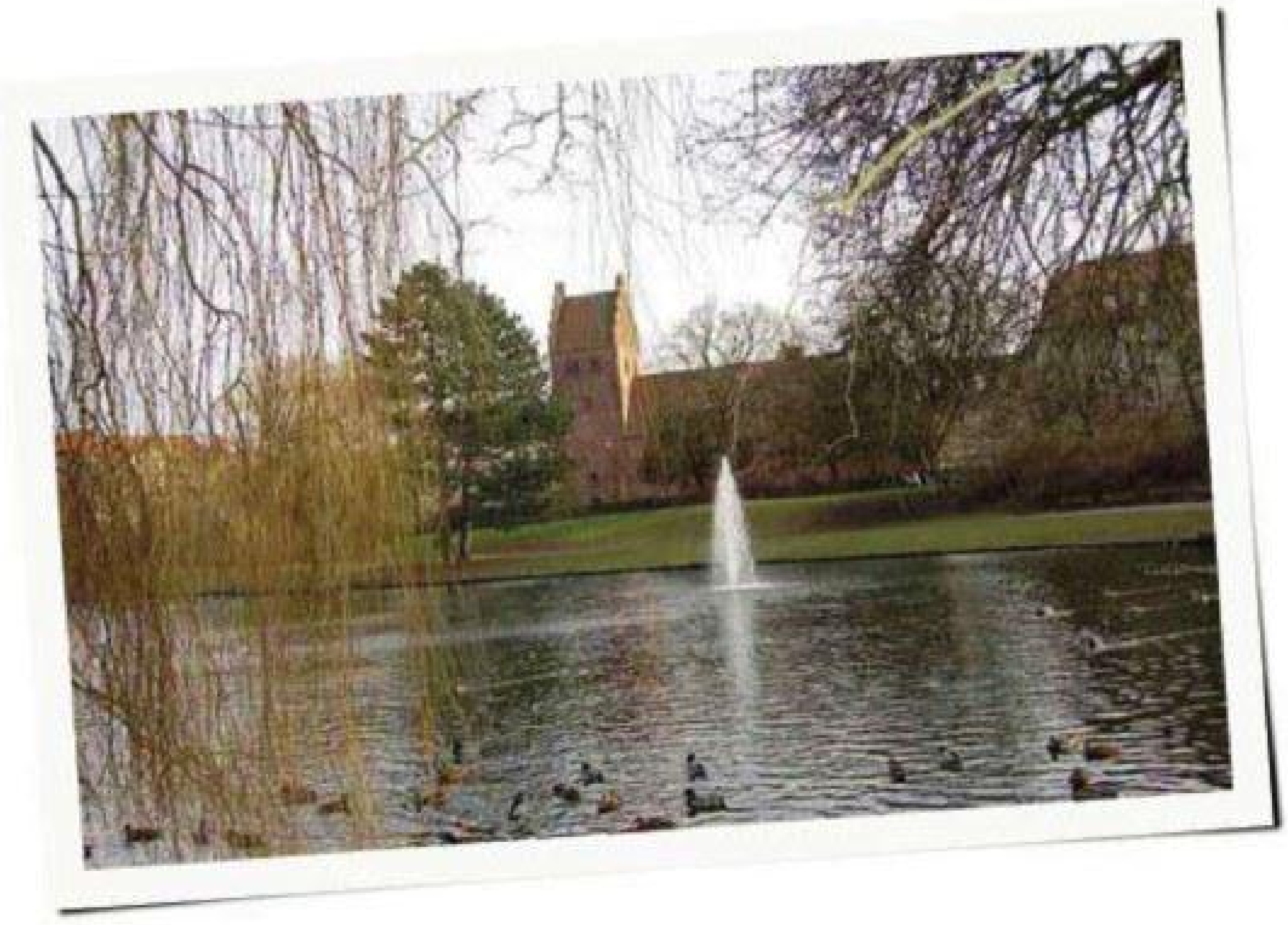
But the sinister reputation still clings to the lake, especially since a young boy from a kindergarten next to the park actually did disappear without trace some months later. He was found drowned in the lake several weeks after that. This time it was no legend.

Another place with a rather sinister reputation is the moat near Christianshavn in the southern outskirts of Copenhagen. Whether they surround an ancient castle or an entire town, moats are often connected to strange stories and mysterious legends. Noble maidens have been pushed into them, and bastard children have been drowned in them, as have useless or nosey servants and the odd gallant knight. But worst of all – moats are practically always the home of a monster of some kind. Moats are of course defensive works, so there is nothing strange in the fact that some lords of the manor have tried to make them even more formidable by stocking them with dangerous animals, or, at the very least, spreading rumours about such fierce creatures. That is the way with the moat at Christianshavn, which is apparently the home of a dangerous monster. Maidens and knights are few and far between these days, but the monster still finds the odd victim or two.

It all started in the late 1960s, when the first stories of the duck- and dog-killer began to surface. Several people had seen ducks, coots and even a swan or two disappear in a swirl of water. In two or three cases, swimming dogs vanish in the same sinister way.

The first suspect was a large pike, which would explain most of the sightings, except the disappearing swans. A swan is too much, even for the biggest of pike. It calls for something even bigger. And in fact there is a fish big enough to swallow a swan in a single gulp. That is the European giant catfish, up to 4–5m (13ft – 16ft 5in) long and with a weight of several hundred kilos. The only problem is that the giant catfish has been extinct in Denmark for some time; although, just a few years ago, living specimens were caught in several lakes in western Denmark, so it is not entirely impossible, although perhaps a bit implausible, that the moat was once home to one of these giants.

Sortedamssøen (The Lake of The Black Pond) lies smack in the middle of Copenhagen. There is not much mystery to be had when



it shimmers gently in the summer heat and Sun-worshippers, dog-walkers, and joggers each try to find a little space along its banks. But don't let the tranquility fool you. Weird creatures have been seen in the murky waters of the lake, spaceships have landed in the middle of it in broad daylight, and some have even put down passengers.

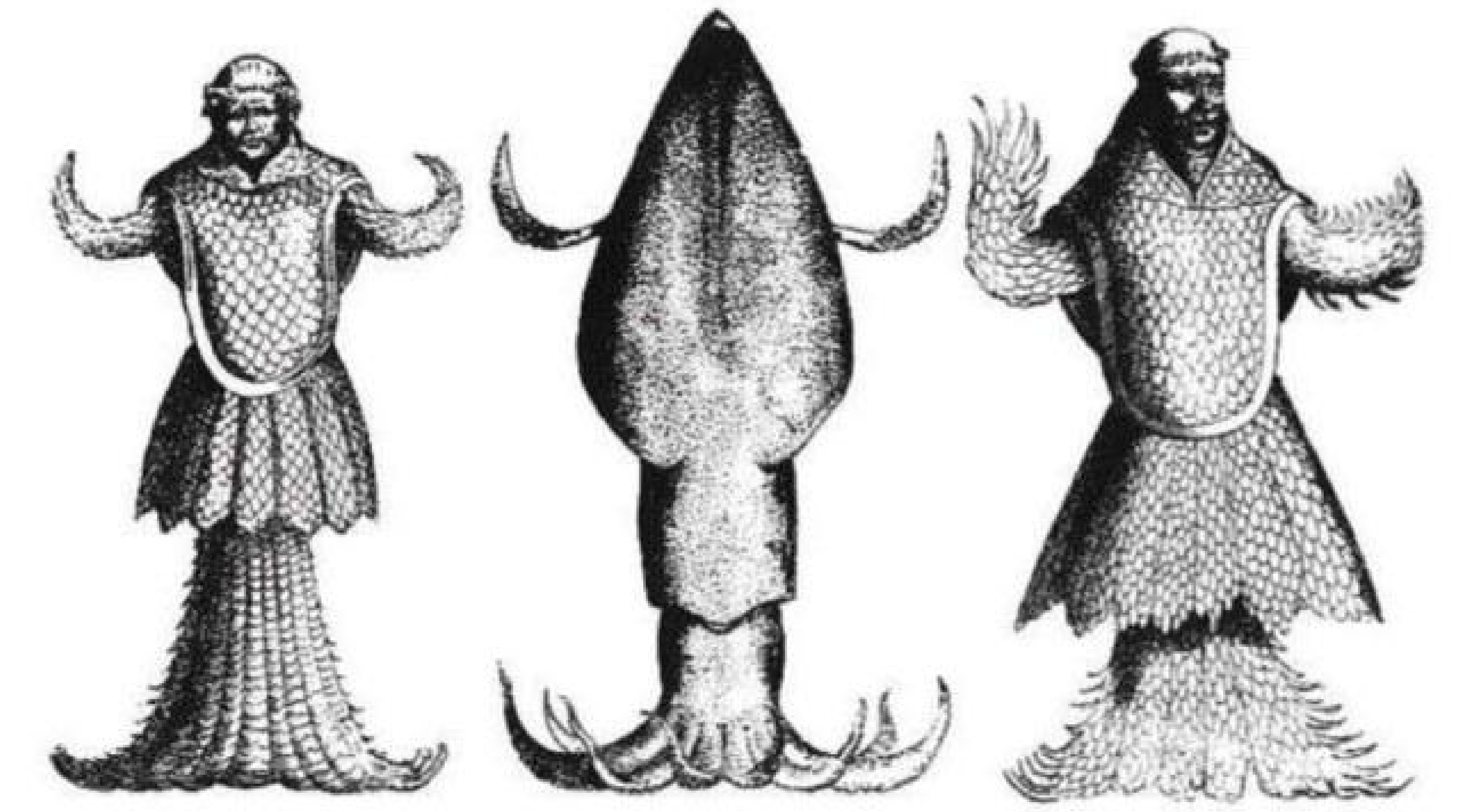
It started in 1928, when for a while the lake became the capital's star attraction. Two whales had suddenly appeared in it. In fact they were harbour porpoises, the smallest kind of whale you could imagine – but nevertheless, there they were. But where had they come from? Porpoises are sea mammals, and since the lake's connection with the sea was closed, how the animals had entered the lake is a bit of a puzzle. After a few weeks, one of the porpoises mysteriously disappeared without a trace, and the other one was found dead on the banks of the lake. And that was that. To this day, no one knows where these cetaceans came from.

About 50 years later, in 1976, things turned even more mysterious when a strange story started to circulate in certain circles in Copenhagen. Apparently, a man on an evening stroll had seen a naked woman wading ashore from the little island in the middle of the lake. The woman claimed she had been abducted by a spaceship, and then had been brought back and dumped in the middle of Copenhagen.

Neither this lake, nor its two neighbouring lakes Peblingesøen and Sankt Jørgens Sø, are very big or deep, but people claim to have seen sea serpents here. Most of the sightings date from the 1970s and 1980s, possibly inspired by tales of the Loch Ness Monster (during those years, it was a frequent guest in Danish newspapers). But some sightings feature simple descriptions of a creature looking like a large swimming snake or giant eel, with a fin or line of long hairs along the back. The lakes have a healthy population of various fish, so some of the sightings might be put down to, say, large pike; but, on the other hand, somebody might have put something in the lake that shouldn't be there. This is the only explanation for the porpoises in 1928 – so why not something else at a later date?

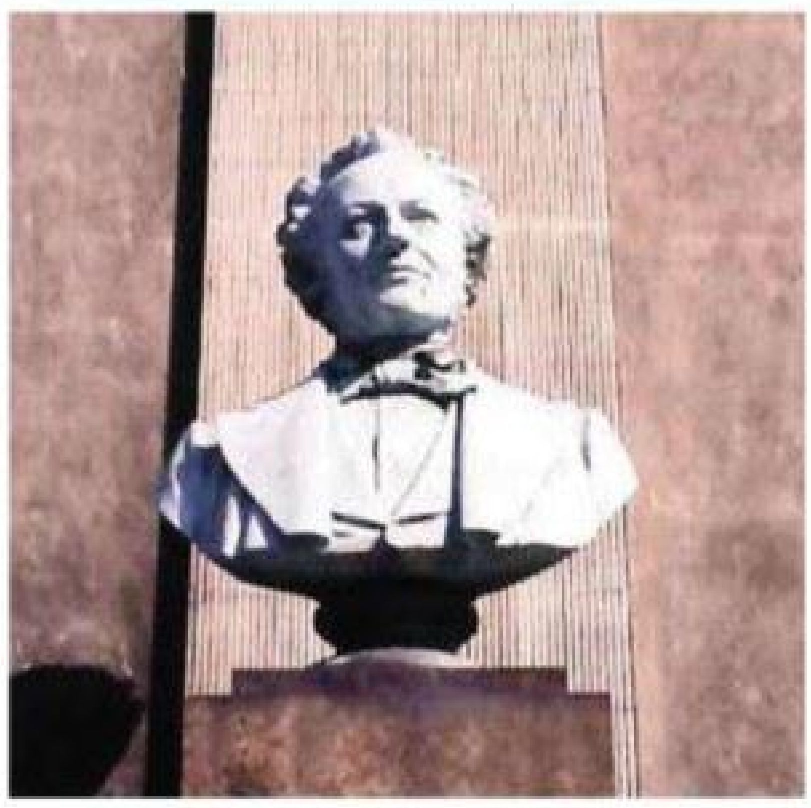
## The strange story of the monster from Bylderup-Bov

One of the strangest Danish lake monster cases took place near the little village of Bylderup-Bov in southern Jutland, only a few kilometres north of the German border. During the summer of 1957, stories about a monster in a local water-filled chalk pit started to make their way to the front pages of various Danish newspapers. The stories were in a sense nothing new: stories about ducks being sucked down in a flurry of water, dogs disappearing, and sightings of the large back of something swimming just below the surface. The big difference in this case was the local blacksmith, who suggested something along the lines of "Why not try and empty the pit?"



**ABOVE:** Sea monks were shown to be large squids by Danish zoologist Japetus Steenstrup (left).

The creature had a shaven head and a monk's robes



"So be it," the mayor probably said, and so it was. On 23 July 1957, a large electric pump was installed, and everybody started pumping.

The pumping plans had been described in various local and national newspapers, so a lot of curious people converged on the little village wanting to be a part of the action.

The locals pumped for three days, but were never able to empty the lake completely, and although they did find some rather large fishes – no pike though – there was no sign of any monsters.

About a month later, they were ready to try again, and since they hadn't found anything in the first little lake, they tried another, this time using an even bigger pump borrowed from a local building company. The second lake was chosen because some of the locals claimed to have seen an enormous fish in it. It was apparently a carp, but according to the eyewitnesses it was so big you couldn't reach around it. The second attempt didn't bring up any fish, monsters, or anything else for that matter. Neither did the third, in which yet another lake was pumped, so eventually the whole thing was abandoned. The following year, the blacksmith confessed that he had set up the whole shebang as a kind of practical joke – trying to make his little village famous. And in that respect he succeeded.

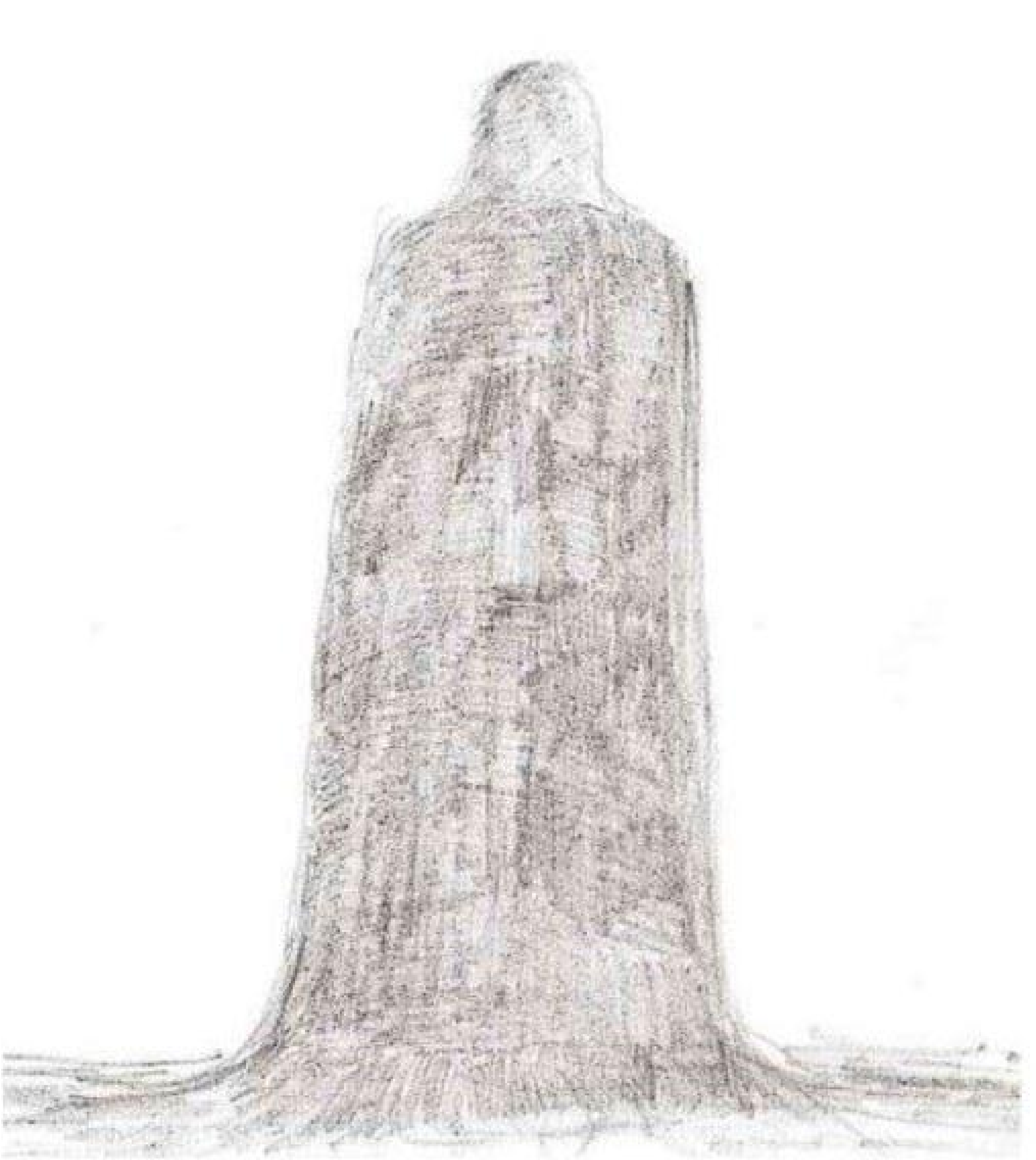
So was it all just a hoax? Maybe; but when I started digging into this story, I discovered a host of sightings of very large, carp-like fishes in the area that went back at least 400 years. There is, of course, nothing strange about large carp, but in each of the stories I was able to unearth, the carp – or whatever they were – are always extremely big; somewhere in the vicinity of 2m (6ft 7in) in length, and with a body as big around as a barrel. Now, that is a *very* large carp, but on the other hand it is an average-sized wels catfish, which might be the actual culprit behind all these tales. Wels were never a natural part of the Danish fauna, but were brought in to this country, probably by monks, in the late mediæval period, and they just might have reached as far as southern Jutland. Unfortunately, we will never know, as most of the lakes in the area have been filled in and nobody has seen the giant "carp" for many a year now.

## The sea monk

Identifying sea monsters can be a tricky business, especially in a country where ordinary monsters crop up on a regular basis. Sperm whales beach themselves almost every year, the odd walrus shows its whiskers every now and then, basking sharks have passed by, and even a blue whale beached itself in the early 1900s. Strange though these creatures might be, they are still fairly easy to identify. The sea monks took a bit more doing, and had some help from one of the most brilliant scientific minds Denmark has ever seen.

The Øresund, the narrow stretch of water between Denmark and Sweden, used to be an excellent fishing area in the days before ferries and bridges. An industrious fisherman could easily bring home large catches, mostly of herring, every day. But every now and then the fishermen caught something very strange. In 1550, one of them brought home a large fish, but a fish like no man had ever seen before. It was the size of a human, with a shaved head and clothing like a monk, but with scales all over, and two rather longish fins where the arms should have been.

When the fisherman came ashore and showed everybody what he had caught, nobody was in any doubt as to the nature of his catch. He had caught one of the legendary sea monks, creatures you could read about (if you could read) in the scholarly tomes of the time. Such an important catch couldn't possibly be sold at the fishmarket, so a message was sent to the king, Christian III, who at once asked to have this wonderful creature brought before him.



**LEFT:** The author's drawing, based on eyewitness testimony, of a strange dark shape which rose from the Alling Creek before sinking back down again.

The king studied the strange creature with interest, and had it placed in the moat surrounding his castle. Here it swam back and forth very slowly, "while ejaculating a number of deep sighs, like a creature wrecked by the deepest sorrow and despair". The king tried to engage the sea monk in conversation, but it just sighed and swam on. The king sent for a priest, hoping that he might be able to talk to his marine colleague, but it was all to no avail. The watery monk would not even answer when addressed in Latin.

After three days in the moat, the sea monk died, never having said a word. The king was rather sorry that he'd never got to talk to his guest, but at least he made sure that it had "a good and Christian burial", although none of the writings of the time mentions just where.

The stories about this, and other sea monks, lived on for more than 300 years before someone finally solved the riddle of these strange beings. Were they in fact nothing but figments of peoples' imagination, or perhaps even a strange kind of hoax designed to turn the interest of people towards the Church?

In the end, it was to be a Danish scientist who solved the sea monks riddle. In 1853, Professor Japetus Steenstrup was told that a sea monk had become stranded on a beach in northern Denmark. Most of it had been cut up and used for dog food, but he managed to salvage a few bits and pieces, and from these he could ascertain that the sea monk was in fact a giant squid. What looked like a monk's robes was the squid's mantle, and the scales were the pigmentations in the skin – the rest was nothing but wishful thinking. And the sighs? Probably just the water being pumped in and out of the siphon below the head of the beast as it swam back and forth in the moat. For a sea creature, swimming around in muddy fresh water around the king's castle must have been a terrible experience.

In this day and age, we don't see many sea monks around here, but every now and then a fisherman drags up a hefty individual. Alas, though, there is not much dignity in being a sea monk anymore. Usually, they end up in Italian stews or Spanish paellas; but the Danish fishermen still insist on calling them sea monks.

## Running water, rising monster

In most books on aquatic monsters, creatures from rivers and streams are often conspicuously absent, and you get the distinct impression that strange creatures are to be found only in seas, oceans and lakes. Until fairly recently, a few legends aside, I would have agreed; but when I started digging a little deeper, I turned up a number of sightings of some very strange creatures indeed – crocodiles, giant snakes and lindorms of Scandinavian legend (see **FT264:32–37**).

One of them – the strangest of the lot – brings to mind Armus, the malevolent creature from the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "Skin of Evil". This creature, though, was seen decades before the famous television series was filmed.

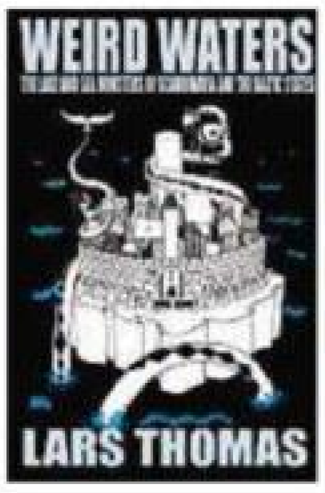
For a meeting with this strange monster, we must travel to western Denmark, to Alling Å (Alling Creek) about halfway between the towns of Randers and Rønde in eastern Jutland. If you make a stop on the bridge today, you will find yourself in the middle of a typical Danish landscape – except for the large upright stone on the meadow west of the creek. You can see it from the road, but if you get up close, you will see a troll-like face carved into the stone. This is the creek guardian.

The stone carving is in fact from the Viking age, around AD 1000 (when it was probably painted in loud colours), but its actual purpose remains unclear. Perhaps it was supposed to keep evil away from what had been a ford for many centuries. Perhaps it is a representation of, and perhaps a warning about, the creek-man. This creature, about which you can find legends all over Denmark, was usually found in creeks with bridges and fords, or perhaps around ferries. Generally, he was no trouble, but once a year he demanded a sacrifice – and should he fail to get it the local people would pay a terrible price, perhaps in the form of a whole group of children drowning simultaneously during a crossing.

The stories about the creekman smack of "Bogeyman" stories told to keep children away from dangerous places, but one Danish woman actually claims to have seen this mythical figure.

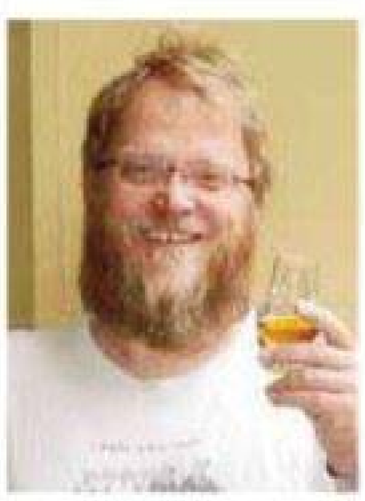
One spring day in 1963, a 22-year-old woman from Randers was standing on the bridge, looking out towards the stone, when she suddenly saw a dark shape rising from the water, like a person standing on an elevator platform. It looked like a man dressed in a black blanket. Nothing much happened, and the young woman was just about to try to get closer when the black thing simply sank under the water again and disappeared. Was it just a figment of the woman's imagination? Perhaps; but when she told the story in 2002, she was adamant about the details of what had happened.

I must confess, I haven't got the faintest idea what this creature could possibly have been. **FT**



Adapted and extracted from *Weird Waters: The Lake and Sea Monsters of Scandinavia and the Baltic States* by Lars Thomas, CFZ Press, 2011 (available from www.cfz.org.uk/, £9.99)

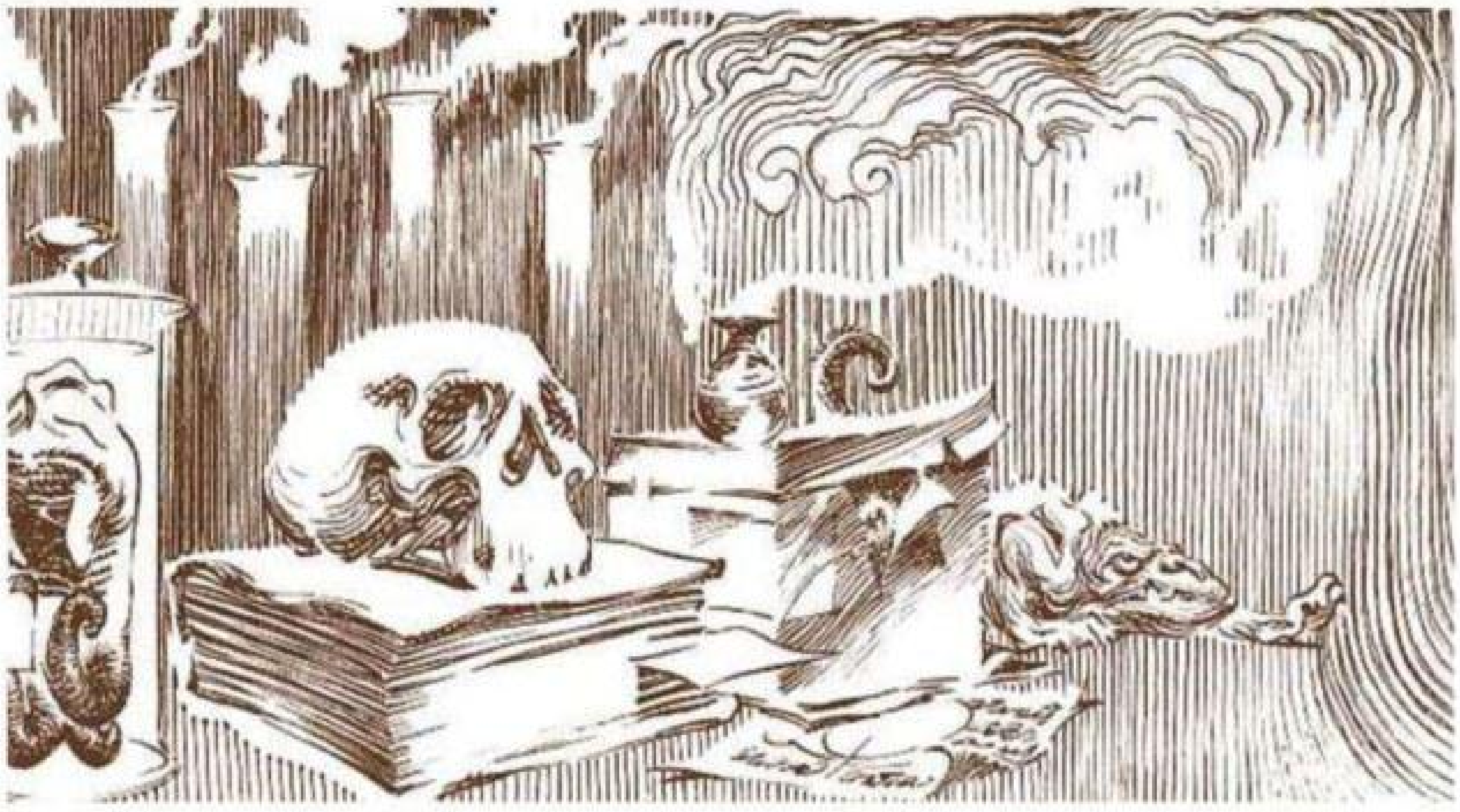
## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**LARS THOMAS** is a Danish marine biologist, cryptozoologist, author and translator. He has conducted field research around the world searching for mystery cats, thylacines, giant monitor lizards, moas, Huia-birds and other anomalous creatures.

# The Fortean Times
# Random Dictionary of the Damned

*compiled by the Hierophant's Apprentice*



## No 42: EARTH MYSTERIES: PART 2

The popular conception of 'earth mysteries' revolves around two core ideas: that ancient monuments are associated with unexplained energies and with straight lines on the landscape – whether in plain sight, as with the lines that mark the Nazca plain in Peru, or less visible, as with the apparent alignments known as leys. A nostalgic faction of researchers cling to their dowsing rods, Ordnance Survey maps and old Gong albums, and still nod wisely at concepts like 'telluric currents', but more adventurous spirits, taking the same starting points, have burrowed a little deeper than that over the last half-century, and made some fascinating discoveries.

The first investigator to try to pin down the 'energy' in and around megaliths in terms amenable to recognised science was the late Francis Hitching. In *Earth Magic* (1976), he recounts how dowser Bill Lewis had claimed that a menhir near Crickhowell in Wales contained a force he could detect, and it ran from the ground *up* the stone in a spiral pattern. Prof. John Taylor suggested that Lewis was sensing minute changes in magnetism,[1] and so Hitching and physicist Dr Eduardo Balanovski took a gaussmeter to the stone. Normal variations in the Earth's local background magnetism are usually in the range of a few hundredths of a gauss: the stone sent the needle off the scale. In a later experiment with Taylor, Lewis marked the Crickhowell stone at the points where the force was strongest: and this was echoed by gaussmeter readings, which were about double the stone's (already high) norm. Taylor urged that these results "must be treated with great caution" – a prudence well-placed, it turned out, as later tests on the stone failed to confirm these promising findings.

On the other hand, Dragon Project researchers found that the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire did contain radioactive anomalies. One of the oddest was a *lower* than background reading around the Kingstone (an isolated menhir outwith the circle); other "sharply delineated 'hot-spots'" showed higher than background radioactivity – between 30 and 55 cycles/minute against a background average of 22 c/m – and there were unusual five-minute-long 'flares' of radioactivity in some places. Writing in *New Scientist* (21 Oct 1982, p168), project consultant Don Robins speculated that the equipment had "detected pockets of radioactive minerals" and noted that: "Radioactive minerals are known to occur at ancient sacred sites in the US and Australia" – but "The developing picture of cyclical variation, however, seems to argue against a fixed source of radioactivity." Was this due to the ebb and flow of underground streams? Robins thought that "this hardly seems adequate to explain the level of the anomalies."

Lack of funding prevented deeper enquiry, and questions remained – and remain. Was radioactivity a *critical* factor in selecting sites for megaliths? And if so, why? And how was it detected in the ancient world?

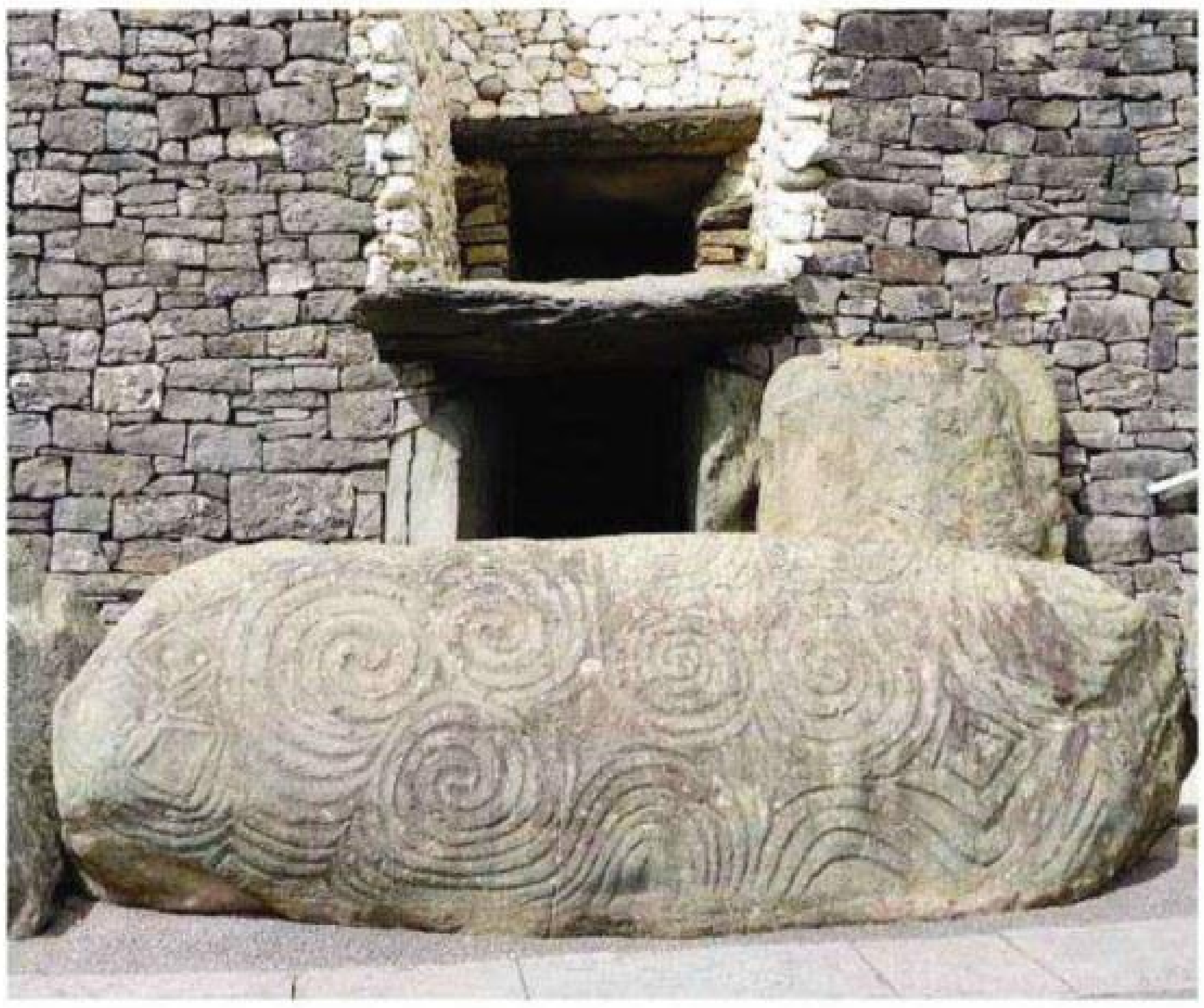
### FROM LIGHTS TO ALIGNMENTS

Rollright is very near a geological fault line, and fault lines have been related by Paul Devereux and associates to 'earthlights'.[2] Seemingly plasma-like discharges, they may be produced by seismic shifts in the Earth's crust. While earthlights from the Rollright fault may have been part of the attraction of the site for the ancient builders, any firm general connection between sites of seismic significance and megaliths is rather less apparent.

There are actually two 'earthlights' hypotheses. The first, known as 'tectonic strain theory' was proposed by neuroscientist Prof. Michael Persinger in the mid 1970s. Bearing in mind anecdotal reports of light phenomena occurring in association with earthquakes, Persinger found correlations between 'UFO' sightings and seismic disturbances, and proposed that piezo-electric effects could generate airborne lights that were identified as 'flying saucers'. He went further, and suggested that secondary seismic effects could produce light phenomena hundreds of miles from the initial disturbance. Sceptics snorted at this extrapolation, but research since has established that seismic events may indeed trigger minor quakes elsewhere.[3] Paul Devereux and others independently found correlations between light phenomena and fault lines, particular in the UK, offering triboluminescence ("the emission of light from a substance caused by rubbing, scratching, or similar frictional contact", says our non-random dictionary) as one possible cause. Light phenomena have been filmed manifesting around volcanic eruptions (as at Mt Sakurajima, Japan, in April 2011) and earthquakes (as at Aquila, Italy, in April 2009).[4]

Devereux went further in another direction, using a wealth of witness reports to suggest that earthlights were in some way conscious, responding to the thoughts and actions of those who observed them. One might wonder about this, in light of hundreds of reports of 'UFOs' that were plainly unrecognised Chinese lanterns, which witnesses often describe as being "clearly under intelligent control". However, research into plasmas by Daniel Bohm and by Romanian scientists suggests very strange things go on inside them that hints at a kind of electronic 'life'.[5]

The most famous location of apparent earthlights is the Hessdalen valley in Norway, long the subject of well-equipped research and data collection by scientists. One of the stranger manifestations took place when observers reported a moving light, which was picked up by radar at the other end of the valley but was invisible to the operators there. Observers have never reported the lights emerging from the ground in Hessdalen – in contrast, for instance, to the outbreak of strange lights around Barmouth, Wales, in 1905 – where one group of witnesses likewise saw a glowing rod of blue light hovering over a road, while another group on the other side of the light saw nothing at all. Some 90 years later, researchers found that the Barmouth lights were related to the local Mochras earth fault.



**ABOVE:** The central passage of Newgrange has a midwinter alignment with the rising Sun.

In the interests of stimulating our more enthusiastic readers, it's only fair to note that Brian Dunning, *alias* the Skeptoid, has forcefully speculated that the Hessdalen lights are lights from aircraft flying along the Trondheim–Oslo corridor.[6] It's equally fair to remark that the photographs of the Hessdalen lights that we've seen look strangely unlike aircraft lights – and we've seen a few of both – and the 'aircraft argument' doesn't account for the strange radar/not-quite-visual case noted earlier. It may, as Dunning argues, behoove the Hessdalen Project to be certain that they have eliminated aircraft from their data; but something else seems to be going on here. While no seismic activity has been recorded in the valley, it *is* rich in mineral deposits, and may bear comparison with Bere Alston, Cornwall, where miners long reckoned earthlights to be indicators of underground seams of copper. With so many possible specific causes, 'earthlights' may turn out to be a portmanteau term for a cluster of related but distinct phenomena.

Straight lines, in contrast, are far less controversial – indeed they constitute the foundation myth of earth mysteries, if Alfred Watkins is taken as their founding father. While it's legitimate to argue that the case for leys has been over-egged, there remain both lost but recoverable knowedge and real mysteries locked in linear form in the landscape.

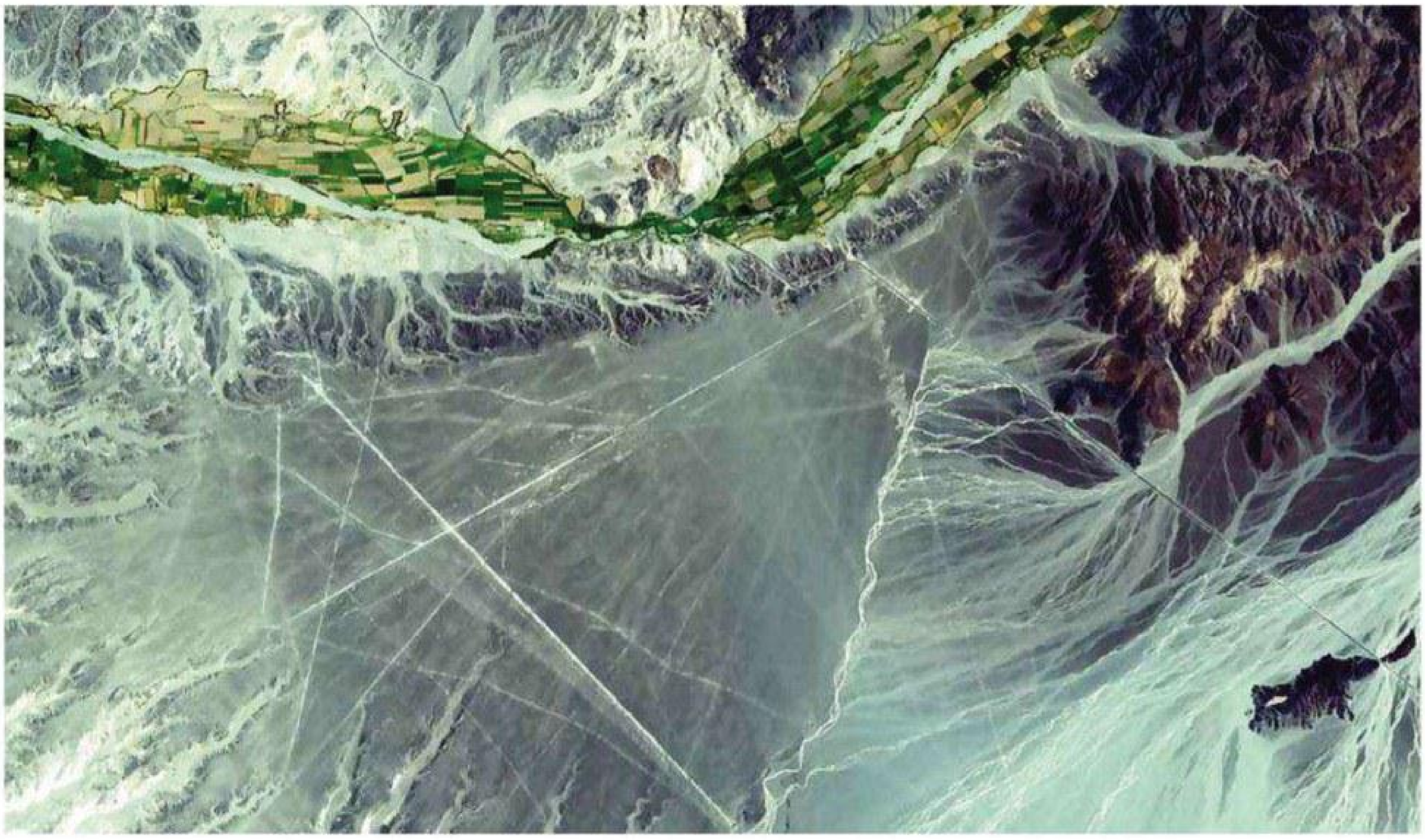
One of the less intractable puzzles, mentioned in Part One (**FT280:53–55**), is the relationship between ancient monuments and the sky. While early archæoastronomists read more into this than the evidence on the ground will happily support, there's no doubt that alignments with sunrise and sunset at solstices and equinoxes are deliberate. It's also been inferred that the first Stonehenge (actually built of earth, and in use from 3200 to 2200 BC approximately) was a necropolis built to conform to the phases of the Moon. These monuments were not, as is still sometimes suggested, observatories or astronomical calculators. They are *markers* of celestial events – in other words, the builders of prehistoric monuments had *already* made their observations of the sky and taken measurements long before they laid a single stone. Such places are not evidence of a kind of primitive science, as researchers once believed: the motivation was almost certainly religious. But it was long, patient work. The creators of the first Stonehenge watched six cycles, each nearly 19 years long, of the Moon before finalising their groundplan. When they were sure of the most northerly point at which the Moon rose, they aligned one side of the north-east 'entrance' to the henge with it.

Celestial alignments have been used to create spectacular light effects on particular days of the year, too. Perhaps best-known of these occurs at the huge Newgrange mound in Ireland's Boyne valley. Inside the mound, a 70ft [21m]-long passage leads to a high stone chamber at its heart. Here, the rising midwinter Sun sends a shaft of light through a roof box built above the entrance to the passage to reach to the back of this central chamber.

In the 1970s, US artist Martin Brennan discovered that Newgrange had been built to create shadow effects too. He found that at midwinter sunrise, as the roof-box at the entrance directs the Sun's rays into the mound, the shadow of one of the circle's stones points like a finger to the entrance stone and its vertical marking. At the same time, the shadow from a nearby stone strikes another carved kerbstone. As Devereux put it, it is "almost as if the builders of Newgrange have left software running in their hardware". Inside the 5,000-year-old stone chamber of Gavrinis in northern France, a solitary block of quartz stands exactly half way along the length of the entrance passage. The light of the midwinter sunrise pours down the passage and intersects those from the Moon at a key point in the 19-year lunar cycle. The builders of Gavrinis deliberately used quartz here, as it glows dramatically when sunlight and moonbeams play on it together.[7]

### ROADS TO 'NOWHERE'

Among the more puzzling ancient landscape artefacts are apparent 'roads' that in some cases lead nowhere in either direction – as with 'cursuses' in the British isles – or focus on a central point but begin seemingly arbitrarily, as do the great Anasazi stone ways that converge on Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. Built about 1,000 years ago, they are fully engineered – surfaced with compacted earth or cut straight into the bedrock, and bordered by earth ridges, lines of stones or drystone walls – and consistently about 30ft (9m) wide. And they are *straight*. They are constructed on beelines that pay no heed to topographical obstacles. When they reached the canyon walls, the Anasazi engineers cut huge staircases up to 25ft (7.6m) wide from the living rock. With



NASA / GSFC / MITI / ERSDAC / JAROS, & US / JAPAN ASTER SCIENCE TEAM

**ABOVE:** One of NASA's sattelite images showing the extent of the Nazca lines; seen here is an area of 14x18km. **FACING PAGE:** Chûn Quoit, Cornwall.

ground surveys and digs, archæologists have now mapped some 400 miles (640km) of these enigmatic highways.

So – why did a people with neither horses nor the wheel need these elaborate highways? Are they roads as such at all? Computer-enhanced infra-red aerial pictures taken by NASA have revealed that on some stretches, the roads have additional road sections running parallel to them. What were *they* for?

The consensus among archæologists and scholars is that the roads were ceremonial or sacred ways that linked the Anasazi Great Houses – village-like, though only intermittently inhabited, crescent-shaped clusters of pueblos and associated ritual *kivas*. It is possible that the Anasazi considered the roads themselves to be holy. There remains a mystery – up to a point – as to who used them, and why they were so broad and so finely made. Be it noted that the Chaco Canyon roads are but one of dozens of such systems of dead-straight roads with little apparent practical use in the Americas.[8]

The beady-eyed William Stukeley (1687–1765) was the first to spot a cursus, nearly two miles (3.2km) long and roughly 100 yards/metres across (widening at one end), near Stonehenge. Stukeley thought he was looking at a Roman racecourse, hence his dubbing it a *cursus*. Of the 100–150 known cursuses in Britain, the longest is Dorset's, which runs northeast/southwest for 6¼ miles (10km) from Thickthorn Down across Cranborne Chase to Martin Down, roughly parallel to the A354.

It is in fact two cursuses end-to-end, at a slight angle to each other; the southerly portion was the first to be laid out. About 90 yards (82m) wide, it's marked by what were originally 6ft (1.8m)-high and up to 30ft (9m)-wide earthworks, with an exterior ditch between 7ft (2.1m) and 30ft wide. It's been calculated that it took half a million hours' work to construct. The earlier portion has been dated to 3300 BC – roughly contemporary with the first (earthen) Stonehenge.

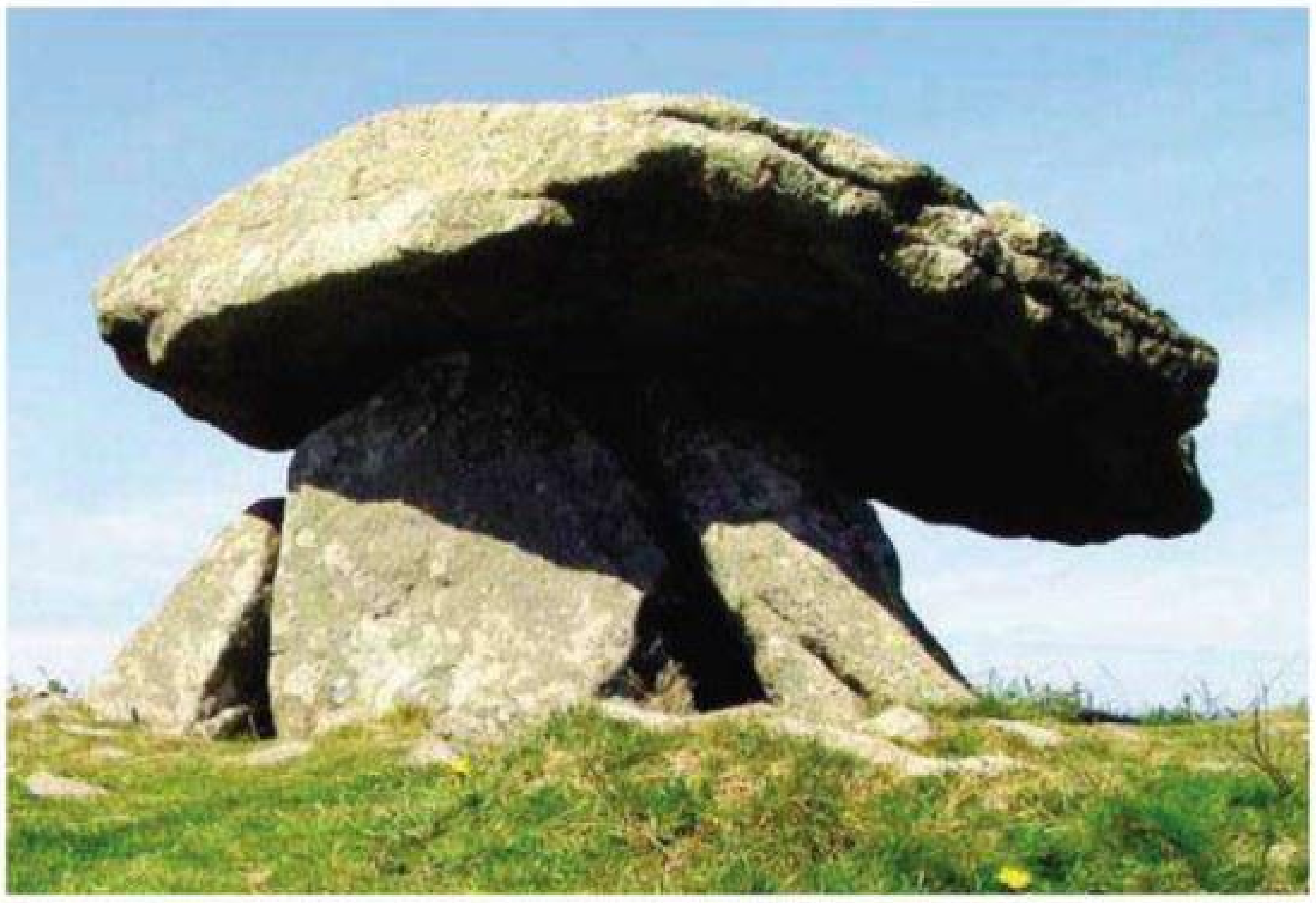
No one knows what went on within these huge areas; it's been proposed some were deer traps and/or archery ranges or 'symbolic rivers', but it may be more suggestive to observe that many run between cemeteries. In this they resemble what are recognised as 'spirit paths' and 'corpse [funerary] roads' in Europe, as well as stone rows in England and France and Irish fairy paths. An ambiguity arises: were they playgrounds for spirits, or were they designed to *exclude* spirits?[9]

## SAID THE STRAIGHT MAN TO THE LATE MAN…

Many an ancient tradition has it that spirits travel in straight lines, and knots and entanglements can entrap them (or contain evil spirits) and various materials or plants will ward them off. The Yuma Indians of Arizona hold that their shamans travel to and from sacred mountain peaks, guided by an eagle, on strings. Archæologists and anthropologists are reasonably certain that the broad type of religion observed by the ancient-monument builders was shamanistic. This is the oldest (and longest-surviving) form of religion we know of, and its basic form is found all over the world. One of the core characteristics of shamanism is the ability (whether actually, purportedly, or subjectively) to travel in the spirit world while in trance (a phenomenon known to us as an out-of-body experience). The trance may be induced, or enhanced, through ritual music, dancing, the beating of drums, and ingesting any number of hallucinogenic substances that were variously smoked, chewed, drunk or snuffed.

In the 1990s Paul Devereux saw intuitively that these data might help explain the ancient straight lines on the landscape; then he discovered that in the late 1970s US anthropologist Marlene Dobkin de Rios, a recognised expert on American shamanism, had joined up the same dots. She said unequivocally that "[T]he ground markings and effigies were built 'due to shamanistic, out-of-body experiences, the so-called aerial voyage.'" Like Devereux, she also associated rock markings so redolent of entoptic imagery (itself associated with altered states of consciousness) with the geometric imagery found on the ground.[10]

This is a distinct step forward in understanding certain aspects of ancient sites, but it also sets off a few hares of its own. The vast outlines of animals drawn into the landscape – as in, most famously, the Ohio serpent mounds and the hawks and spiders on the Nazca plain – may well, as Dobkin de Rios proposes, be images of 'power animals', boundary markers warning off rival shamans from forbidden territory. But what kind of eye are they meant to be seen with? The optic nerve, or the inner eye of trance? As for the lines themselves: are they route *markers* for the entranced shaman? Or merely records of shamanic flights? Or something more subtle – both markers and warnings, designed to keep the shaman focused literally on the strait and narrow path, lest he lose himself in a psychic wilderness? And of course the whole hypothesis presumes, among other things, that if Shaman A causes an



JIM CHAMPION / CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE

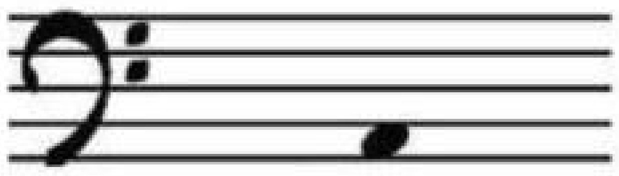
enormous image – indiscernible at ground level – of his power animal to be inscribed in the landscape, Shaman B's awareness has in some sense to be *really* out of his body, and see the image, in order to get its message. That fires an arrow right into the heart of materialist assumptions about the nature of mind, body and spirit. It's not surprising then that some of those who started out decades ago being intrigued by leys have now found themselves investigating the nature of consciousness.[11]

## SEEING AND HEARING

These insights caused researchers to go, after a fashion, full circle, to re-examine the physical nature of the ancient sites. It's known, for instance, that people (some more than others) are sensitive to magnetic fields and can be literally entranced by them; and many ancient sites have high levels of magnetism in their stones. The Dragon Project Trust also wondered if there might be some kind of 'memory field' at ancient sites; and in the mix of ideas was the shaman's role as healer, and the healing effect of sleep and dreams employed by the Aesclepian doctor-priests at Epídhavros in the Pelopónnisos. Thus in 1990 was hatched a project to discover if the dreams of different people (unknown to one another) would share similar motifs at specific sites (**FT178:30–35**). The chosen sites were Carn Ingli in the Preseli Hills, Pembrokeshire, and three in Cornwall: Chûn Quoit, an isolated moorland dolmen dating to 3000 BC, with highly radioactive stones; Madron Well, located in the ruins of a tiny mediæval chapel, where an ancient healing ritual involving sleep was carried out up until recent centuries; and Carn Euny, an underground passage and chamber complex, known as a *fogou*, of unknown purpose, whose origins date to around 500 BC.

Volunteers were asked to record six dreams they had at home, as a control reference. On site, a helper would periodically check the sleeper for rapid eye movements; when they occurred, the sleeper was awoken and his or her account of their current dream was tape-recorded. By 2000, the project had gathered enough on-site accounts to make analysis worthwhile, initially to establish the distinctions – if any – between home and on-site dreams. But not all the sleepers had provided descriptions of home dreams, and comparisons of the remaining data suggested there was no real difference between the content of the two. The Dragon Project Trust has yet to acquire funds to analyse the on-site dreams properly but, promisingly, simple 'eyeballing' of the transcripts has shown some consistently site-specific elements in more than one person's dreams.

One of the most intriguing directions taken by recent earth mysteries research is archæoacoustics. In the 1990s, it was found that the most heavily illustrated of the Lascaux and Chauvet caves in France produced more echoes than others.[12] At Newgrange, Chûn Quoit, Carn Euny and other sites, Robert Jahn and Paul Devereux discovered that the chambers, although markedly different in configuration, produced very similar resonances, between 95 and 120Hz. Newgrange, specifically, resonated at 110Hz. By the standards of modern concert music, which is sharper than the traditional 'Verdi pitch' where middle C=256Hz, this is exactly the note of A2 –



– toward the bottom of the baritone range and almost dead centre of the bass singer's first register. It's a piquant coincidence that A is the note to which orchestras tune up, but perhaps more intriguing is the finding by clinical neurologist Dr Ian A Cook and others of UCLA that "at 110Hz the patterns of activity over the prefrontal cortex abruptly shifted, resulting in a relative deactivation of the language center and a temporary switching from left to right-sided dominance related to emotional processing. People regularly exposed to resonant sound in the frequency of 110 or 111Hz would have been 'turning on' an area of the brain that… relates to mood, empathy and social behavior."[13]

This is but the tip of the archæoacoustical iceberg: other odd sound effects have been found at sites all over the world, including certain rocks at monuments and temples that naturally produce musical sounds. If the ancient shamans employed anything like the terrifying sounds produced by modern Siberian throat-singers, it would be no surprise at all if musical life in prehistoric times could sometimes amount to an otherworldly journey.

*The Hierophant's Apprentice is deeply grateful to Paul Devereux for advice and guidance in preparing this and the previous entry on earth mysteries (**FT280:53–55**).*

### NOTES

**1** "David Marks, in *The Skeptical Inquirer*, asserts that there are no theories to account for paranormal effects. This is not true for dowsing. Serious dowsing claims, such as those made by Soviet geologists, which are difficult to account for in terms of the reception of normal sensory cues, may be explained by postulating human sensitivity to small magnetic field gradient changes. The theory is supported by a series of tests involving 150 subjects.

"The magnetic theory predicts that dowsers can achieve above-chance results only if the features they claim to detect are associated with magnetic gradients of at least one nano-tesla per metre. This was not the case in Randi's recent experiments, so his chance results are therefore consistent with the magnetic theory, which merits further investigation." – Tom Williamson: "Dowsing Explained", *Nature*, 320:569, 1985.

**2** See Paul Devereux *et al*: *Earthlights*, Turnstone, 1982, and Paul Devereux: *Earthlights Revelation*, Blandford, 1989. See also the page on earthlights at www.pauldevereux.co.uk.

**3** See http://bit.ly/9F9eb6 (sciencedaily.com); http://bit.ly/oWh2hR (aip.org); http://bit.ly/clNzkU (sciencedaily.com).

**4** For the Sakurajima eruption, see http://bit.ly/mzzl1B (YouTube); for the Aquila quake, see C Fidani: "The earthquake lights (EQL) of the 6 April 2009 Aquila earthquake, in Central Italy", *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences* 10, 967–978, 2010 [http://bit.ly/qpsNJM]; for another careful documentation of earthquake lights, see F St-Laurent: "The Saguenay, Quebec Earthquake Lights of November 1988–January 1989, *Seismological Research Letters Vol 71 No 2* (Mar/Apr 2000). [http://bit.ly/pyydDq].

**5** See Paul Devereux: "The Fourth State", *Strange Attractor Journal*, No.4 (2011), pp131–9.

**6** See http://bit.ly/nP41A8 (skeptoid.com).

**7** See Aubrey Burl: *Megalithic Brittany*, Thames & Hudson 1985, p111.

**8** See Devereux: *Haunted Land*, pp33–55.

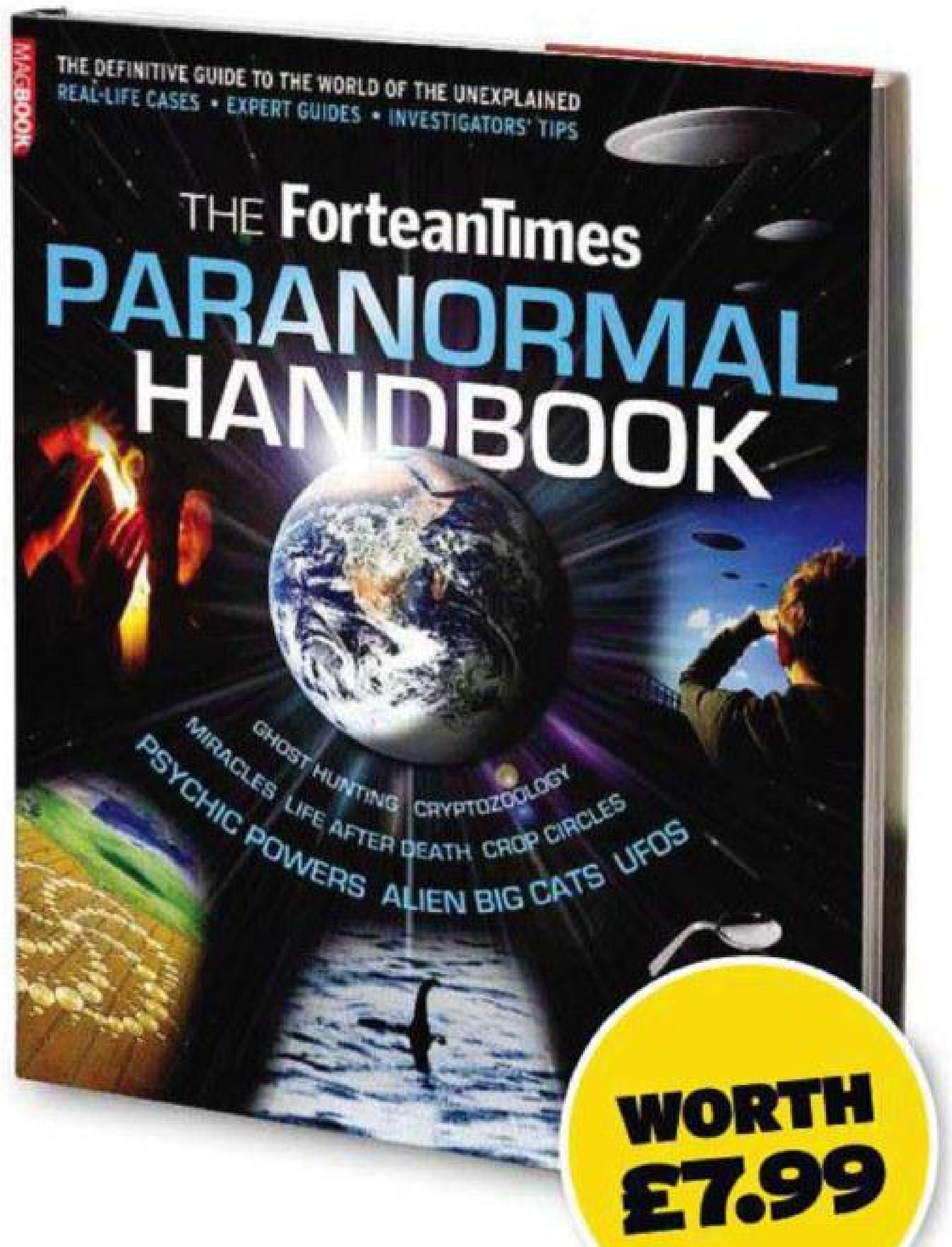
**9** For more on cursuses, see Devereux: *The Sacred Place*, Cassell 2000, pp165–8.

**10** See Devereux: *Haunted Land*, pp51–2.

**11** This line of enquiry is pursued in the academic journal *Time & Mind*, http://bit.ly/aVx25t (berg-publishers.com).

**12** See Devereux: *The Sacred Place*, p75.

**13** See Ian A Cook *et al*: "Ancient Architectural Acoustic Resonance Patterns and Regional Brain Activity", *Time & Mind* Vol.1 No.1 (Mar 2008), pp95–104. For a general overview of archæoacoustics, see Paul Devereux: *Sacred Geography*, pp125–37, and "Archæoacoustics" at http://bit.ly/60wxa8 (landscape-perception.com).


MAGBOOK
THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF THE UNEXPLAINED
REAL-LIFE CASES • EXPERT GUIDES • INVESTIGATORS' TIPS
THE ForteanTimes
PARANORMAL HANDBOOK
GHOST HUNTING CRYPTOZOOLOGY
MIRACLES LIFE AFTER DEATH CROP CIRCLES
PSYCHIC POWERS ALIEN BIG CATS UFOS

**WORTH £7.99**

# FREE ForteanTimes PARANORMAL HANDBOOK

## WHEN YOU CLAIM 3 TRIAL ISSUES

ForteanTimes
APOCALYPSE
THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES
Bard

## Your Phenomenal Offer:

- **3 trial issues** to start your subscription – if you're not completely satisfied, simply cancel during your trial period and claim a FULL REFUND
- **FREE** Fortean Times Paranormal Handbook.
- **SAVE up to 21%** on the shop price
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops

**Order online:** using offer code below
www.dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes

**Order by phone:**
0844 844 0049

or complete and return the form below

## ForteanTimes FREE Fortean Times Paranormal Handbook

☐ **YES! Please start my subscription to Fortean Times with 3 trial issues and send me my FREE Fortean Times Paranormal Handbook.** I understand that the first 3 issues of *Fortean Times* I receive are on a no obligation trial basis. If I'm not completely satisfied, I can write to cancel during my trial period and claim a FULL REFUND. The trial issues and FREE Paranormal Handbook are mine to keep, whatever I decide.

☐ OR I am an existing subscriber. Please extend my subscription with this offer.

**YOUR DETAILS:**

Mr/Mrs/Ms Forename
Surname
Address

Postcode
Telephone
Mobile
Email Year of birth

**CHEQUE & CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: £39.98 FOR 12 ISSUES (SAVE 21%)**

1 ☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd.
2 ☐ Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Debit/Maestro (issue no. ☐)

CARD NUMBER START DATE EXPIRY DATE

SIGNED TODAY'S DATE

**DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT: £19.99 every 6 issues (SAVE 21%) – UK ONLY**

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit DIRECT Debit

Please complete and send to: Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 800 Guillat Ave, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne ME9 8GU

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the manager: Bank name
Address

Postcode

Account in the name(s) of

Originator's Identification Number

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 0 |

Ref no to be completed by Dennis Publishing

**Instructions to your bank or Building Society**
Please pay Dennis Publishing Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Dennis Publishing Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society

Branch sort code
Bank/Building Society account number

Signature(s)
Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account

**Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd** uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website **www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/** or call us on **0844 844 0053**. If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise, that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, e-mail and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via **www.subsinfo.co.uk** or **privacy@dennis.co.uk** or **0844 844 0053**.

Gifts limited to first 100 orders. Please allow 28 days for delivery. UK only.
This offer is limited to one offer per household

**Return this order to:** Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR,
Fortean Times, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park,
Sittingbourne ME9 8GU (NO STAMP REQUIRED)

OFFER CODE: P1113

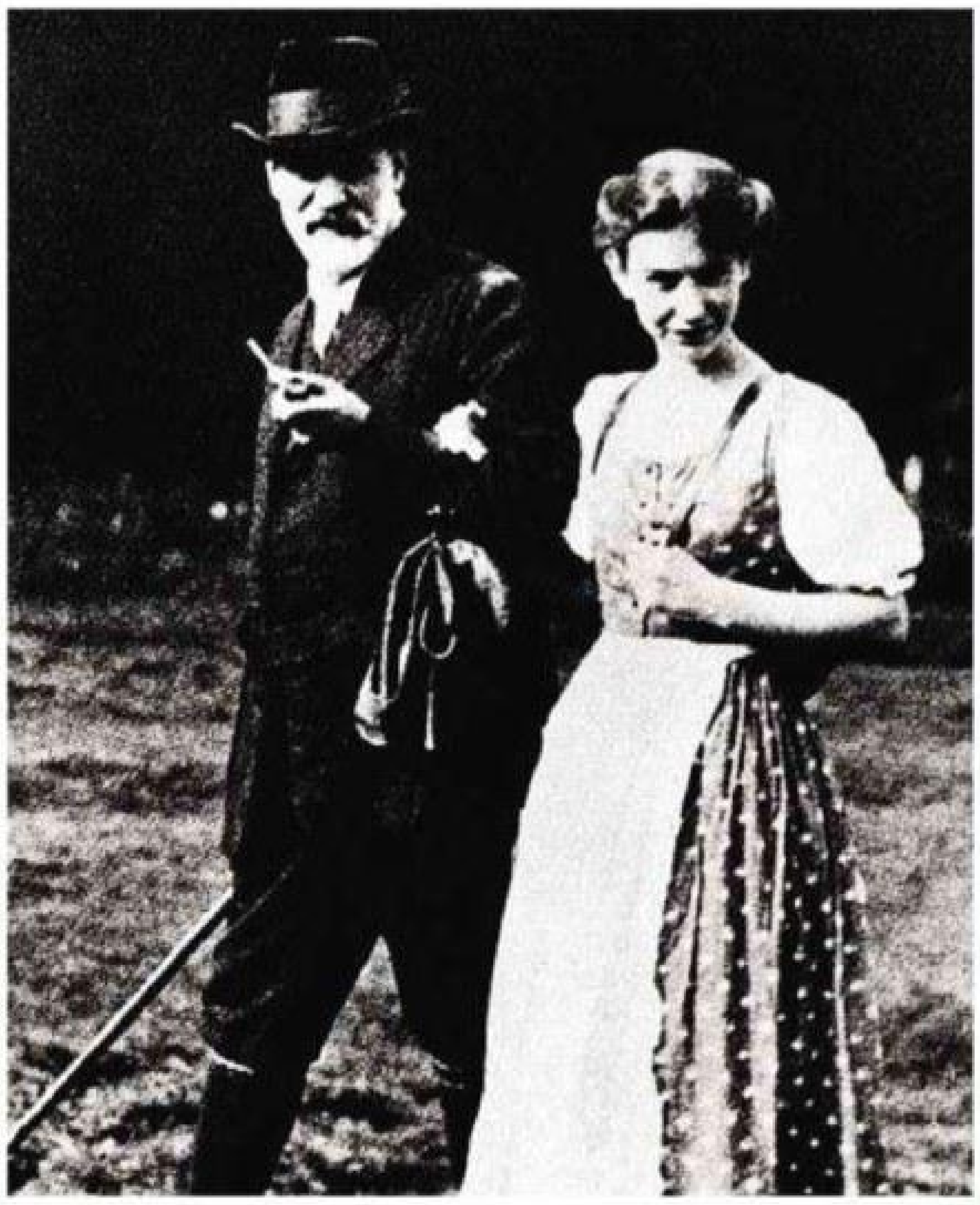
**HAVE YOUR SAY**

# forum

# Don't shrink the kids!

Looking back at the history of the psychoanalytic movement in Britain, **MIKITA BROTTMAN** warns of the dangers of putting your children on the couch.

**MIKITA BROTTMAN** is an author, critic, psychoanalyst, and humanities professor at Maryland College of Art, Baltimore. Her most recent book is *Phantoms of the Clinic: From Thought-Transference to Projective Identification* (Kamac, 2011).



**ABOVE:** Sigmund and Anna Freud visiting the Italian Dolomite Mountains in 1912.

GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE

When the British figurative painter Lucien Freud died earlier this year, the tabloids enjoyed running lurid tales about his peculiar lifestyle and eccentric habits. He was described as a sex maniac who had countless affairs with much younger women, a philanderer who fathered as many as 40 children, a gambler, gun-collector and notorious hermit (his London home apparently had neither doorbell nor telephone). "Freud's sex life was so complicated even granddad Sigmund, founder of psychoanalysis, would have struggled to unpick it", said Nick Webster in the *Daily Mirror* (23 July 2011).

Sigmund Freud obviously didn't raise his grandson, but their relationship brings to mind the well-known conjecture that shrinks' kids are always hopelessly screwed up, and while this is obviously a generalisation, it's fair to say that psychoanalysts have been trained to observe people and listen to them with a detached curiosity, even (perhaps especially) if those other people are their own offspring. Since Freudian psychoanalysis in particular places so much emphasis on childrearing and child-parent relationships, it would be surprising if most analysts did not, in fact, display an unusual interest in their own family dynamics. Natural curiosity can be healthy, but when curiosity becomes interference, things can start to get out of hand – and if the Freud family's history is anything to go by, it's never a good idea to put your own kids on the couch.

That's what Sigmund Freud did to his youngest daughter Anna, the only one of his children to become an analyst in her own right. These days, Anna Freud is well known for her work on child analysis even though, like other pioneering child analysts such as Hermine Hug-Hellmuth and Margaret Mahler, Anna Freud had no children of her own. She remained unmarried, though she had a lifelong friendship with an American heiress, Dorothy Trimble Tiffany Burlingham, a patient of her father's. After Dorothy's marriage fell apart (she left her husband Robert, who committed suicide by jumping out of his New York apartment window), she moved in with the Freud family, accompanying them to London in 1938 where they fled to escape the Nazis. After Sigmund Freud's death the following year, Mrs Burlingham settled at 2 Maresfield Gardens, not far from Anna Freud, and in 1940 she moved into the Freud home at 20 Maresfield Gardens, where she lived until her death in 1979.

With Anna Freud, she decided to experiment with bringing up children in a household headed by two strong women, with no men in sight. Anna took it upon herself to psychoanalyse the Burlinghams' four young children, Bob Jr, Mary, Michael and Katrina, and the treatment does not seem to have been a success. Two of the children – Bob Jr and Mary – eventually committed suicide; Mary did so by taking an overdose of sleeping pills in a bedroom of the home Anna Freud shared with her mother, the very house in which she had undergone analysis.

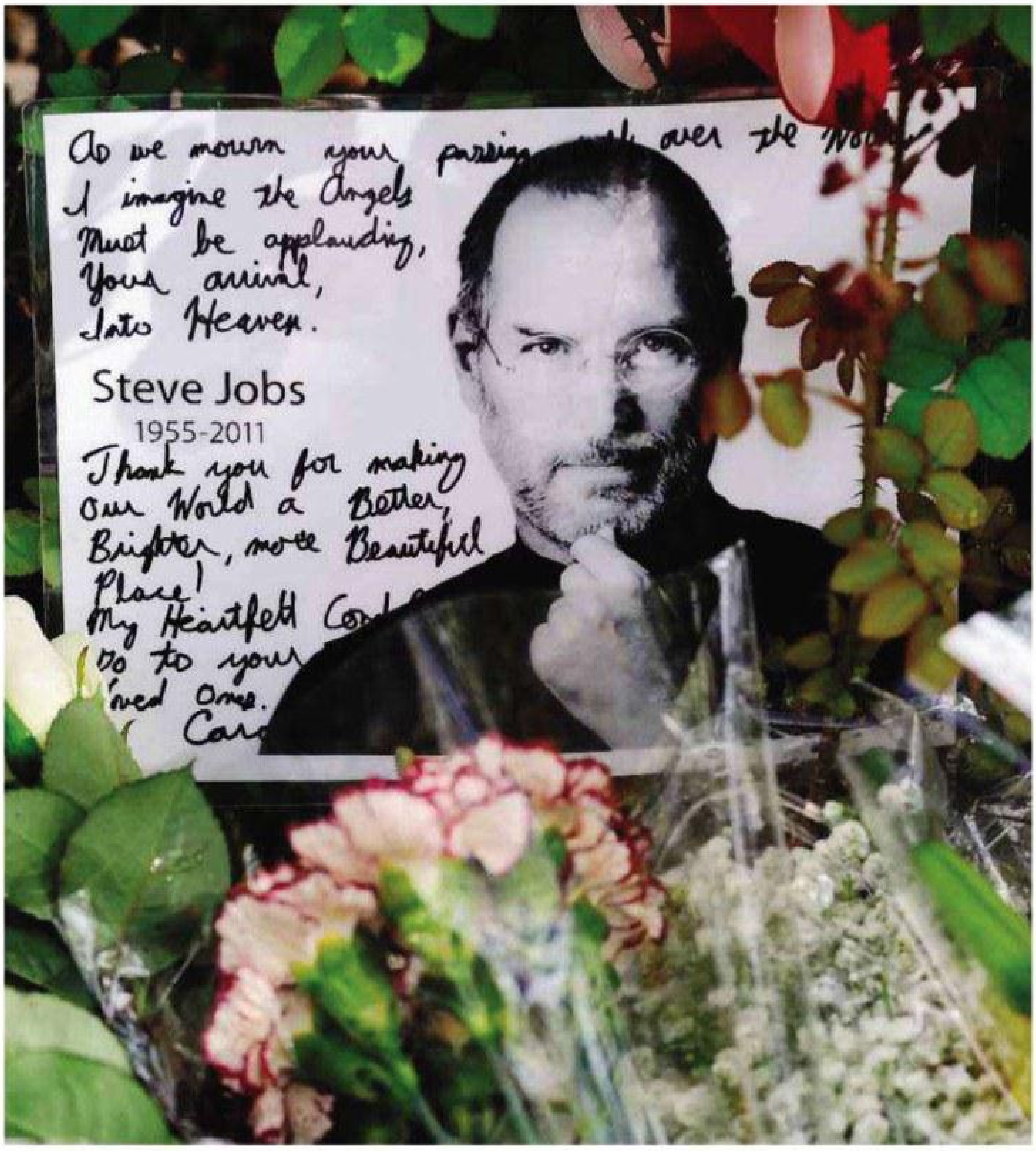
In the field of child analysis, Anna Freud's greatest rival was another of her father's former patients, Melanie Klein, who also moved to London after the outbreak of Nazi hostilities in Vienna. Although Klein saw herself as a Freudian, Miss Freud did not think her rival adhered closely enough to her father's ideas, and the conflict between these two formidable women split the British Psychoanalytical Society into two opposing factions. Klein published a number of influential books, including *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (1932), and *Children in Need* (1948). Her most famous concept was the notion of the "good enough mother", a standard that might not sound especially high, but is arguably one that Klein herself didn't meet.

Following Freud's model, Melanie Klein also psychoanalysed her children, one of whom, her son Hans, died aged 27 in a suspicious climbing accident. Her daughter Melitta came to believe that Hans's death was in fact a suicide, and turned against her mother with venom. Melitta was married to a psychoanalyst named Walter Schmiteburg, one of Sigmund Freud's associates, and despite her childhood experiences, she herself became a well-known analyst, fighting with her mother publicly and histrionically at meetings of the British Psychoanalytic Society. After a final falling-out in the 1930s, mother and daughter never spoke again. When her mother died, Melitta arranged to give a lecture on the day of the funeral, forcing her colleagues to choose between the two events. Although Melitta Schmideburg became well-known in her field, publishing papers on such subjects as the pathological need to start fires, she eventually gave up her practice, concluding, perhaps on the basis of her own experience, that psychoanalysis is harmful for both patient and analyst. She had no children. FT

# My own portable Jesus

For several years now, media commentators the world over have been speaking of something called 'the cult of Apple' – and, says **SD TUCKER**, judging by the public's reaction to the recent death of Steve Jobs, that phrase may not be entirely misplaced...

**SD TUCKER** is a writer based in the Merseyside area. He has never knowingly used an Apple product, but he's sure they're just great.



**ABOVE:** One of many floral tributes following Steve Jobs's death, this one outside his home in Palo Alto, California.

GETTY IMAGES / KEVORK DJANSEZIAN

Apparently in 1978, not long after Apple had just moved into its first offices in Cupertino, California, Steve Jobs, the company's co-founder, attended the office Christmas fancy-dress party in the costume of Jesus Christ. This, it turns out, was not to be the only time he'd be identified with the Second Coming.

Several commentators, witnessing the numerous impromptu shrines that sprang up around Apple stores after the Apple CEO's death on 5 October, have opined that Jobs is being treated as if he were some kind of secular saint. It's a concept with which we have become increasingly familiar in recent years, perhaps most notably (and hysterically) after Princess Diana's death back in 1997. Floral tributes, candle-lit vigils and public tears are now seen after many a prominent public figure's death, in spite of the fact that the vast majority of the 'mourners' never knew or even met the deceased. Many have viewed these kinds of scenes as a consequence of the recent decline in religious belief in the West, with worship of the rich and famous standing in for veneration of the saints. If so, then perhaps this is why other elements of so-called 'modern spirituality' have also appeared amidst the storm of media coverage around Jobs's death.

For instance, it's usually not too long after a celebrity dies that self-styled psychics and others begin claiming to have spoken to his or her departed soul. This has happened in the past with people like Diana and Michael Jackson; and, sure enough, within a day or so of Jobs passing on, mediums were claiming to have received messages from beyond about his likely role in the afterlife. For example, video footage of a California-based psychic named Riz Mirza, purporting to act as a 'channelling medium' for the voice of Alexander Graham Bell, can easily be found online. In this recording, the supposed voice of Bell can be heard stating that he and certain other of his fellow dead scientists will be waiting eagerly for Jobs in order to welcome him as one of their own.

**Jobs is being treated as if he were some kind of secular saint**

According to 'Bell', Jobs actually *chose* to die of cancer so that he could thereby begin to contribute towards some kind of unspecified but important scientific work in the spirit world. Apparently, his mission on Earth was that of "facilitating communication", just as Bell himself had done when patenting the telephone. Jobs may have appeared, to the untrained eye, to have been designing and manufacturing a highly profitable range of computers and smartphones, but these, 'Bell' assures us, were just a "disguise" – a kind of "mask" for the transmission of spiritual energy. Macbooks and so on were actually nothing less than a form of "physical manipulation of the workings that are within you", secretly being used by Jobs as a way of bringing "light" to his country and the world. In this way, he was in fact an "alchemist", whose products would inspire some kind of positive change amongst the young people who used them.[1]

Bizarrely, this isn't the first time that psychics have claimed to have insight into the inner workings of Mr Jobs's soul. In May 2009, for instance, Barbara Courtney, a medium who acts as a 'psychic consultant' in Silicon Valley, predicted a kind of 'Second Coming' for Jobs at Apple, from which he was then on sick leave with his tragic illness. "My feeling is he will come back," she said, but "I think it won't be for very long." It was, she said, "iffy" as to whether he would still be CEO in two years' time – his health might not allow it. As it was, Ms Courtney proved to be essentially correct in her predictions; although predicting that a sick man might not be able to continue his job two years down the line is, perhaps, not really all that impressive. Less impressive still was her earlier prophecy, reported on 3 January 2000, that Jobs would soon be leaving his then-role as interim CEO at Apple in order to start up a new company, having become "restless" there. Three days later, at the Macworld Expo, Jobs announced to the world that he would be dropping the word 'interim' and filling the chief executive role at Apple on a permanent basis.[2]

Of course, while the mainstream reaction to Jobs's legacy in the wake of his death was overwhelmingly positive, strange conspiracy theories soon began coming out of the online woodwork. For instance, perhaps recalling previous false reports of Jobs's death which went viral, some commentators seem to have decided that Jobs was still alive, and that his supposed demise was all a mere publicity stunt designed to encourage sales of the new iPhone.[3] The people making such statements seem to have been lone posters rather than credible sources, but no doubt variants of this particular meme will only grow as time goes on.

An equally uncharitable conspiracy theory making the rounds is that Jobs did not actually die of cancer at all, but of AIDS. This wholly unsubstantiated theory has its ultimate origins with Wikileaks, which organisation's Twitter account was apparently publicising a link to doctored photographs of medical papers which supposedly showed that Jobs had tested positive for HIV in 2004. Even Wikileaks themselves stated that these documents "should not be taken at face value"; which makes you wonder just why they were directing people towards them in the first place.[4]

The idea that Jobs had HIV/AIDS was no doubt also a factor in representatives of the Westboro Baptist Church – that odd organisation which pickets soldiers' funerals and claims that their deaths are a result of God's hatred for homosexuals – posting tweets engaging in quite the opposite of deification. According to Margie Phelps, the daughter of the church's leader, Jobs "had a huge platform: gave God no glory & taught sin". Seeing that Phelps had apparently composed this tweet using an iPhone, numerous people lost no time in posting counter-messages pointing out the irony of this fact. Her reply was as succinct as it was idiotic: "Rebels mad cuz I used iPhone to tell you Steve Jobs is in hell. God created iPhone for that purpose! :)"[5] If this is indeed so, then God must have a better understanding of irony than does Mrs Phelps.

If to Margie Phelps Jobs was some kind of false prophet, then to numerous others he appears to have been perceived as some kind of guru. According to that well-known expert upon matters spiritual, Rupert Murdoch, for instance, Jobs was "one of the most influential thinkers… of all time". President Obama, meanwhile – no stranger to empty, overblown rhetoric – deemed him to be a "visionary", as did apparently several hundred other commentators. Michael Bloomberg, the Mayor of New York, said that Jobs "saw the future". Most astoundingly, according to Michael Arrington of *TechCrunch*, "People like Steve Jobs are supposed to live forever."[6] These particular sound-bites have been carefully cherry-picked by me, of course, but they clearly speak of Jobs as being some kind of great teacher who somehow transcended the very limits of what it means to be human… by making nice phones and laptops.

That Jobs has somehow come to be thought of as a great spiritual teacher by some can be seen in any number of places. For instance, a popular US website offering something called 'Love Psychic Readings' features the following quote as evidence of why you need to contact its psychic hotline: "'You've got to find what you love,' – Steve Jobs of Apple says so." I suppose we'd better all do as we're told, then. A website called CaliforniaPsychics.com, meanwhile, informs us solemnly: "Jobs has both his Sun and Moon in Pisces," which is, apparently, "the sign of the spiritual seeker".[7] Even Christian commentators have got in on the act. According to Andy Crouch of *Christianity Today*, for instance, by choosing an apple with a rainbow coming out of it for his company's early logo, Jobs turned "the very archetype of human fallenness and failure" into "a sign of promise and progress". The iPad, he says, "offers its blessing to ordinary mortals" and every time that Jobs went on stage to launch a new product, he did so "with a miracle in his pocket".[8] Hopefully, that isn't some kind of euphemism.

The fact that Jobs was said to be a Buddhist (accounts differ as to just how serious was his affinity with the faith) was also played up in the media, as articles with titles such as *Steve Jobs's Mantra Rooted in Buddhism: Focus and Simplicity* attest. As if to heighten his countercultural credentials further, he was even said to have been a one-time lover of folk-singer Joan Baez, to have taken LSD, to have quoted Bob Dylan in business meetings, and to have regarded the 1960s 'hippie manual' *The Whole Earth Catalog* as his 'personal Bible'. No wonder *Guardian* readers loved him, then.[9]

Furthermore, reports that Jobs went on a trip to India, and that he sought free meals at a Hare Krishna temple after he had dropped out of college in the 1970s, were also considered by some pundits to be important to his eventual outlook on life. This, however, entirely ignores the fact that he reportedly found his trip to the East to be "intense and disturbing", and that he ultimately claimed that the failure of his search for enlightenment there was "one of the first times that I started to realise that maybe Thomas Edison did a lot more to improve the world than Karl Marx and Neem Kairolie Baba put together".[10] If Jobs did indeed get something out of his emotional ties to Buddhism, then, it was simply a realisation that certain oversimplified aspects of its teachings and æsthetics could be exploited for commercial purposes.

Enlightenment? There's an App for that. FT

## NOTES

[1] http://bit.ly/pOgDRX (YouTube).

[2] http://gizmo.do/jBcmZ (gizmodo.com); http://bit.ly/qobDTf

[3] See, for instance, http://bit.ly/oeaxJI (alunaticpope.com).

[4] http://bit.ly/mXCtuv (news.gkrom.com).

[5] http://bit.ly/o5dPSO (escapistmagazine.com).

[6] http://yhoo.it/oL7NaD (news.yahoo.com).

[7] http://bit.ly/nH69FF (religionarticles.net); http://bit.ly/noinlY (blog.californiapsychics.com).

[8] http://on.wsj.com/pzKWXu (online.wsj.com).

[9] http://yhoo.it/oUfISI (news.yahoo.com).

[10] http://bit.ly/nzLXQ6 (firstpost.com).

# More tales of the unexpected...

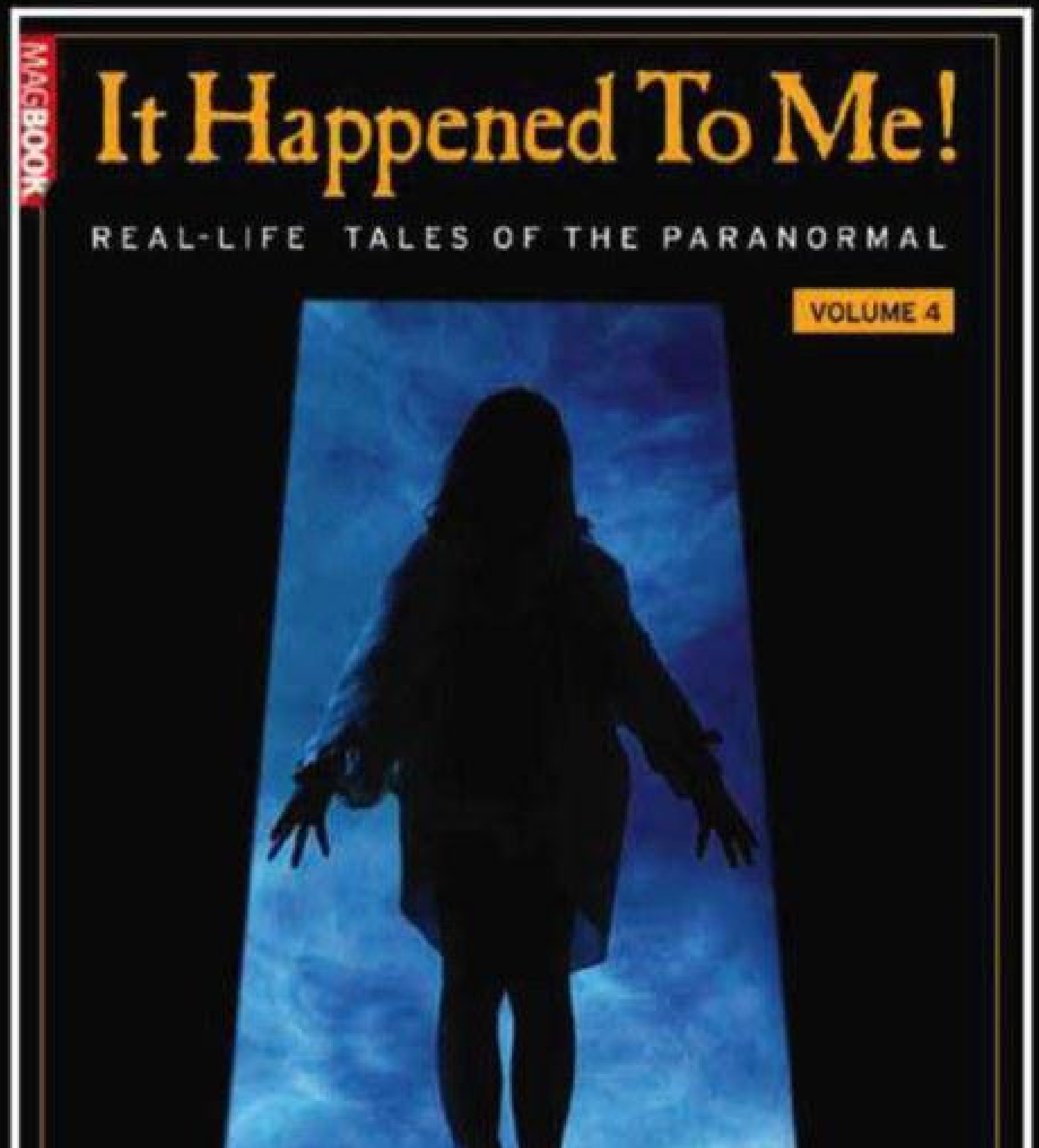
The faceless figure that stepped out of the fog

OUIJA
MYSTIFYING ORACLE
GOOD BYE

The ouija session that summoned a shadow man

The ghostly children who played patacake

# All these stories and more in...



MAGBOOK

It Happened To Me!

REAL-LIFE TALES OF THE PARANORMAL

VOLUME 4

Ordinary people's extraordinary true stories from the pages of

ForteanTimes

£7.99

**IT HAPPENED TO ME** VOLUME 4

**ForteanTimes**

presents more true-life encounters with the unexplained

**TO ORDER DIRECT CALL 0844 844 0053**
**OR VISIT MAGBOOKS.COM FOR PRINT AND DIGITAL EDITIONS**
**ALSO AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM**

amazon.co.uk

WHSmith

NOW ALSO AVAILABLE ON AMAZON KINDLE STORE

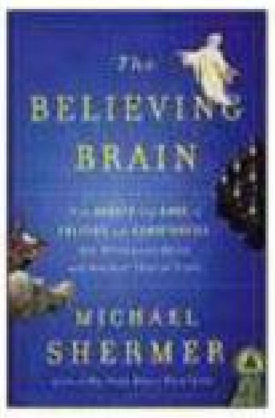
SEND REVIEW COPIES OF BOOKS TO: REVIEWS EDITOR,
**FORTEAN TIMES**, DENNIS CONSUMER DIVISION,
30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD, UK.

This month's books, films and games

# reviews

# The architecture of our beliefs

## Reality exists independently of the mind, concludes an admirably open-minded sceptic in a fine study of how human beliefs grow, develop and are extinguished



### The Believing Brain

**From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies – How We Construct Beliefs and Reinforce Them as Truths**

*Michael Shermer*

Times Books (Henry Holt & Company) 2011

Hb, 385pp, notes, ind, £19.99, ISBN 9780805091250

**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.99**

Michael Shermer, founder of *The Skeptic*, *Scientific American* columnist, and professor of psychology and the history of science, has published several ventures in this direction already, particularly *The Science of Good and Evil* (2005) and *The Borderlands of Science* (2003).

However, as his latest target is not the usual rogue's gallery of irrational and credulous beliefs but the mechanism of belief itself, *The Believing Brain* is more an update of the strand he began in *How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God* (2003) and *Why People Believe Weird Things* (2007).

Shermer has devoted 30 years to "understanding how beliefs are formed, nourished, reinforced, challenged, changed and extinguished." The key, he says, lies in understanding why people believe anything at all. He concludes that the brain is "a belief engine": our conception of 'reality' emerges from the way our perceptions are interpreted and, in turn, are overseen by our beliefs, which can change. This process seems to be a fundamental property of the brain. "Reality exists independent of human minds," Shermer says; perceptions are being generated by 'external' impingements. However, "our understanding of it depends upon the beliefs we hold at any given time."

Part two of the book is an important study of the two main algorithm-like heuristic tools that the brain applies to incoming perceptions. Patternicity is Shermer's word for one of these, and it is as essential to language as it is to seeing. In extreme form, we know it as *pareidolia*, a fancy word for seeing faces in clouds, or meaning in an odd conjunction of objects; it can inspire poetry.

Agenticity is more complex, as it seeks indications of 'intention' and 'meaning' among the patterns. You cannot listen to a voice, for example, without automatically trying to make 'sense' of it. Without discipline, it will even impose meaning where none exists, leading sometimes to anxiety, nightmares or paranoia about conspiracy.

'Patternicity' and 'agenticity' form what Shermer calls "the architecture of belief systems" and, in part three, he launches into a fascinating analysis of how they affect belief in the afterlife, in God, aliens, miracles and conspiracies.

Shermer leads us through the latest neurological discoveries (including Persinger's brain experiments on perception, interpretation and meaning), out of mere materialism and into the rarefied debates between physiologists and neurologists about the nature of the mind.

For now, Shermer's statement that "the mind is what the brain does" is pretty frontline stuff. In part four, he shows clearly what this means for our burgeoning belief systems: how they evolve, seek confirmation and reinforcement, and how they can flare and die. We are treated to unexpected insights into natural and pathological situations, many common to us all and some leading to extreme interpretations of both natural and (apparently) supernatural phenomena.

> "For now, Shermer's statement that 'the mind is what the brain does' is pretty frontline"

It's a personal book, too, recognising our innate tendency to belief by sandwiching the corpus of the book between opening and closing chapters entitled, in Fox Mulder's phrases, "I want to believe" and "The truth is out there".

Chapter three is devoted to a critical analysis of his 'journey of belief' from born-again Christian to atheist-humanist-rationalist. While Christians put his 'lapse' down to "the evils of liberal secular education", atheists tend to credit education in science for "demolishing antiquated faith-based beliefs".

The actual story, Shermer notes, is more complex: "rarely are important religious, political or ideological beliefs attributable to single causal factors."

One of these influences was Shermer's "old-school Skinnerian" psychology tutor, who confessed to the necessity of moderating the strict cause-and-effect rationalism required of his scientific work; "Outside that framework," wrote Douglas Navarick, "I try to keep an 'open mind' so I won't miss anything, such as the possibility that a coincidence could mean something more than a chance event."

This attitude is the opposite of the narrow, blinkered focus that Fort liked to pitch anomalous data at. It is what, perhaps, we hope 'true' scientists practise, and it is wonderful to find alive and well in a disciple of Skinner, upon whom the blame for many of the ills of modern materialism is heaped.

Shermer goes on to explain, step by step, the mental, philosophical and social dilemmas of his own journey; the issues, people and events that shaped the changes he went through; and what became important to him in resolving those issues and precisely why.

I found this chapter most compelling because it came across as an honest and reasoned analysis. Erudite yet easy to read, it is a gem within an equally valuable setting, the whole being a genuine illumination, and validation, of modern scepticism.

Many (including some self-deluding sceptics) might fail when measured against this even-handed philosophy. All forteans should read this book. Those true to the spirit of Fort should feel comfortable in Shermer's august company, even with some room for discussion.

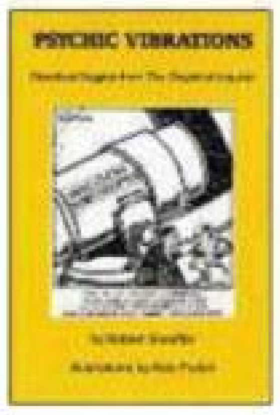
**Bob Rickard**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**SHINES A BRIGHT SPOTLIGHT ON THE NATURE OF BELIEF** **9**

# Bedside boobytrap

A compendium of skeptical snippets gleefully demolishes daft claims but also highlights omissions from fortean literature



## Psychic Vibrations

**Skeptical Giggles from the *Skeptical Inquirer***

*Robert Sheaffer, illus by Rob Pudim*

Create Space 2011
Pb, 318pp, illus, inds, $19.95/£19.99,
ISBN 9781463601577
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £19.99

Robert Sheaffer has been turning in his semi-satirical 'Psychic Vibrations' column for the *Skeptical Inquirer* since 1977. This volume is a compendium of selections from the first 20 years of the column, further enlivened by Rob Pudim's often very clever cartoons.

The contents are ordered by approximate theme – 'Alien Antics', 'Implausible Science and Medicine' (a splendid historical archive of ads for quack doctors, curse lifters, purveyors of cosmic wisdom, and such, apart from anything else), 'Psychic Powers and Predictions', 'Astonishing Animals', 'Doomsdays and Conspiracies', 'The Sacred and the Profane' (much batty creationism here) and – what else to call it? – 'Beyond Description'. Articles are in chronological order within these sections.

As Sheaffer notes in his introduction, the column started with snippets and gradually increased its attention span, so later entries in each section tend to be longer and more focused than earlier ones. Even so, this isn't a book to be read at a sitting. This is partly because the incredibly rich fare tends to do in one's boggle threshold quite quickly. But for aficionados of very strange ideas, it's a small treasury of gems that can act as both resource and entertainment – so thank the Library Angels for the comprehensive index; and sceptics with slightly daffy friends can slip it into their guest rooms as a gentle bedside boobytrap next to the black candles and tinfoil helmets. Its other great virtue is that laid out in chronological order as it is, one can follow the development (or lack of it) of various differently-logical notions.

Where others would be reaching for their revolvers, Sheaffer maintains a dry irony in the face of so much madness. His stoicism occasionally reaches heroic levels, as when dealing with the ritual satanic abuse scares of the late 1980s and early 1990s. At other times he wisecracks, as when describing contactee-cum-hoaxer Billy Meier's arch-defender as "an attack Chihuahua", or noting that Roswell researchers "continue to make incredible discoveries, but mostly about each other". And we learn things that have mysteriously escaped mention in the mainstream fortean literature.

For example, we hear that Quentin Fogarty, witness to the famed New Zealand UFOs of 1978, later recalled "feeling at the time that the lights were collecting the souls of the dead." Walt Andrus, of MUFON, endorses a book identifying UFOs as angels. In 1979, Stan Friedman predicts a globally televised UFO landing by the end of the 20th century. So much for nuclear physics. In Xucurus, Argentina, in 1980, Martians "resembling 'enormous portable radios'" are sighted. And so on.

We learn too that 'animal psychic' Penelope Smith, called by an anxious owner of a stroppy horse, "requested that the owner place the horse on the telephone" and proceeded to tick the animal off somewhat, apparently to good effect. Sheaffer comments with due sagacity: "If this technique works, it won't be long until sore throats are healed by having a frank discussion with the germs that cause them."

We're also reminded of 1980 US presidential hopeful, long-haired, 68-year-old spiritualist Donald Badgely. The long hair was crucial: "I think hair has little holes in it which stimulate the mind. Women have more hair than men, and that's one reason women have more intuition." And in 1993 'Barbara', of San Anselmo, CA, announces that she channels Barbie – yes, the doll, which she calls the "archetypal feminine plastic essence who embodies the stereotypical wisdom of the 60s and 70s" (quite so, but something from which the rest of us hoped we had long been saved), whose "truths are too important to be pre-packaged". *Sic, sic, sic.*

I have a couple of gripes. In places the typography looks as if it has stumbled out of one of those ancient versions of Quark (RIP) that couldn't tell the difference between a letterspace and a wordspace, and someone's failed to turn typewriter single quotes and apostrophes into the real thing. Irritating. More critically, valuable and entertaining as the book is, it's a missed opportunity.

Sheaffer has been surveying this stuff for over three decades, time enough to have developed both a sense of its history and a more sophisticated view than a faintly superior air toward it all. One would have liked some contextual essays, however brief, that manifested something more than the now-stereotypical CSICOP/CSI tendency to unreflective dismissal of the irrational. As Sheaffer says, he has material for a second volume. Let's hope he takes the opportunity to make a proper book of his sedulous documentation of the world's wackiness.

**Peter Brookesmith**

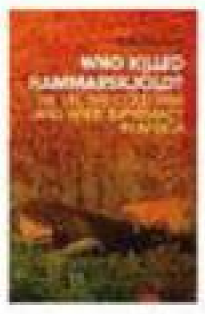
**Fortean Times Verdict**
HIGHLY ENTERTAINING WAY TO GET YOUR EYES OUT ON STICKS... **7**

## Who killed Hammarskjöld?

**The UN, the Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa**

*Susan Williams*

Hurst and Company 2011
Hb, 300pp, notes, bib, ind, £20.00,
ISBN 9781849041584
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00



After travelling thousands of miles, visiting libraries and archives, interviewing eyewitnesses and re-examining the previous inquiries, Susan Williams still cannot tell us who killed UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in 1961, nor how it was done. Nor, for certain, that the plane crash in the Congo, which killed him and everyone else on board, wasn't an accident.

Hardly anyone still believes the official version of the incident, not least because a perfunctory official inquiry took place at which witnesses who saw things which didn't fit the official verdict of 'pilot error' were marginalised or ignored, and photographs were doctored. It looks like the standard formula: conspiracy and cover-up.

The evidence assembled over the 50 years since could plausibly support a scenario in which the plane was brought down by a bomb or shot down by another aircraft. Many eyewitnesses reported seeing a second, smaller aircraft near Hammarskjöld's plane before it crashed. The authorities didn't exactly rush to the accident site, perhaps to allow time for people to arrive at the scene and ensure everyone was dead. (Another witness reported a vehicle coming and going hours before the plane was 'found'.)

Culprits? Many interests had reason to want Hammarskjöld dead: the French, dickering in Central Africa; the Americans (CIA), who thought this meddling Swede was a bit pink; South Africa, afraid that the UN would encourage African nationalism; the big companies, some British, who were after the Congo's minerals. None of these trails leads to a conclusion.

We have a confession (a pilot says he shot the plane down by accident while trying to force it to change direction); two people who say they heard radio transmissions from an aircraft apparently attacking Hammarskjöld's plane, contradicting the 'accidental' confession; and documents (possibly faked) which appear to implicate an obscure South African organisation in planting a bomb on the plane. None of it adds up (which is probably the intent, at some level).

If there is no final answer, the search takes her on interesting trails through imperialism and the cold war in Africa, the territory suggested by her subtitle. A fascinating story, nicely written, thoroughly documented and produced on good paper with a decent binding. This is very good history or historical whodunit.

**Robin Ramsay**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**NO CONCLUSIONS IN A FINE CONSPIRACY INVESTIGATION** **8**

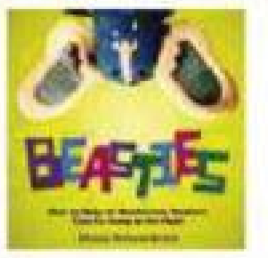
## Beasties

### How to Make 22 Mischievous Monsters That Go Bump in the Night

*Diana Schoenbrun*

Penguin 2010
Pb, 106pp, illus, ind, $17.95/£12.99,
ISBN 9780399535970

**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69**



The domestic arts don't normally get much of a look-in at *Fortean Times*, but Christmas is looming, cash is short, and you may want to make a stuffed Baba Yaga (*pictured*) or Nessie for the small fortean in your life.

Diana Schoenbrun's menagerie of beasties – from fish-headed alien to rather fuddled-looking zombie – use scraps of whatever you have to hand (multicoloured faux fur?) and could be made in an evening by anyone who can follow very basic sewing instructions and can be trusted with a pair of scissors. The results are amiably silly and rather charming.

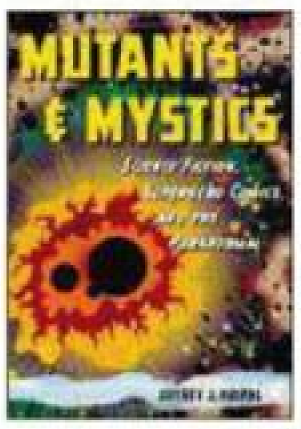
**Val Stevenson**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**DOMESTIC SCIENCE FOR A SKINT FORTEAN CHRISTMAS** **8**

# Comics get mystical

## A most rewarding examination of paranormal themes within science fiction and comics in terms of comparative religion



## Mutants & Mystics

### Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal

*Jeffrey J Kripal*

University of Chicago Press, 2011
Pb, 376pp, illus, notes, ind, $29.00/£18.50,
ISBN 9780226453835

**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.65**

Jeffrey Kripal, chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Rice University, Houston, Texas, continues the exploration of "reading the paranormal writing us" from his previous book *Authors of the Impossible*.

Paranormal themes are clearly a motivating force in superhero comics and print science fiction, and Kripal looks at them in terms of comparative religion, treating the texts as he would mystical literature in order to find hidden connections that indicate some transcendental aspect to our existence.

As this purpose suggests, he takes extremely seriously what is so often considered to be ephemeral and trivial, an apparent fantasy universe which reflects what are, for him, genuinely paranormal aspects of the world.

Hence he finds profundity, and a deep spiritual impulse, in seemingly mundane aspects of American popular culture, arguing that what appear disposable are in fact "what ifs" that speak to our deepest fears and aspirations.

On a neurological level, comic books tap into our right hemispheres, which are holistic, mystical, non-linear. The paranormal relies on that side of the brain for its expression, inhibited as it otherwise is by the linear, restrictive left side. The non-verbal right brain uses images, so comics are an ideal vehicle for its concerns.

He identifies seven mythemes (essentially characterised as the divine; oriental influences; the alien; radiation; mutation; the realisation that paranormal events are real; and 'authorisation', i.e. our ability to write ourselves anew) which together form what he describes as a "Super-Story".

This crosses cultural boundaries and taps into universal religious impulses. His aim is to demonstrate the possibility of liberating human potential, opening us to more subtle realities than the one we experience in our daily lives. No longer "neurological puppets" or subject to the whims of a supreme being, the alien is not something outside us – it is us: we become the authors.

The message is that we need to step backwards from our culture to see these hidden patterns, and in this endeavour Kripal provides new maps of the secret world of superpowers. To access these deep strata of reality and to achieve a measure of self-realisation, we need to embrace this strangeness and not be frightened of it.

The book is not quite as theoretical and abstract as it sounds. It is based on discussions with writers and artists, and as a by-product is full of fascinating biographical details. Kripal examines a number of individuals who exemplify his arguments, such as Alan Moore, Ray Palmer, Jack Kirby, Barry Windsor-Smith, Philip K Dick and Whitley Strieber.

He shows that in many cases, life and art were intertwined in an occult relationship, and that by sublimating their experiences, the authors were able to tap into topics frowned upon by conventional science. What had seemed to be metaphors were actually expressing something much deeper, in the process forming modern mythologies, and thereby transforming real-life paranormal experiences into art, to the extent that they often could not be untangled.

How far readers will follow Kripal rather depends on their own attitude to the paranormal, and the extent to which they are prepared to consider superhero comics as some kind of gnostic outcropping.

He has a lively style and a deep love of (perhaps reverence for) his subject matter, but this is not an easy read. Even so, I wish the book had been available when I was a teenager and my mother chided me for wasting my time on superhero comics. I could have claimed that I was actually expanding my consciousness through a dialectic with popular culture, and tapping into the transcendental.

Readers of what has frequently been dismissed as sub-literature have an intellectually respectable answer to critics and will be encouraged to know that time spent with it is more than just a pleasant way to fill an idle hour.

**Tom Ruffles**

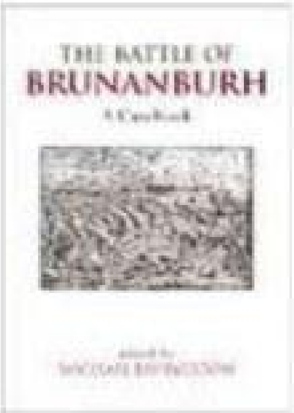
**Fortean Times Verdict**

**SCHOLARLY AND ENTHUSIASTIC LOOK AT A MARGINALISED FIELD** **8**

To order any of these titles – or any other book in print – contact the
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP
Telephone: 08430600031 Fax: 01326 569555 Email: FT@sparkledirect.co.uk
Address: Fortean Times Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 0TP.
We accept all major credit and debit cards including Switch & Amex. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to the FT Bookshop. Delivery is 7–10 days, subject to availability. Postage & packing is free within the UK.

# Back to the source

## Contemporary context, mythology, sagas and textual embellishments contribute to unearthing an English legend



### The Battle of Brunanburh

**A Casebook**

*Ed: Michael Livingston*

University of Exeter Press 2011
Pb, 458pp, notes, bib, ind, £25.00, ISBN 9780859898638
**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £25.00**

The battle of Brunanburh is as important to English history as those of Hastings or Bosworth Field. It is where, arguably, Englishness came of age. In 937, King Athelstan and his English forces defeated an army of Irish, Hiberno-Norse, Scots and Strathclyde Britons in what became known as 'The Great Battle'. Over the centuries, records of it spread far and wide across mediæval Europe, in poem and song, in chronicles and prayers, and in sagas and charters. But where did the battle take place? The evidence has always been limited and open to interpretation.

Michael Livingston's *Casebook* brings together all available written materials relating to the battle, in their original languages, translates them (some for the first time), and debates the many and varied interpretations associated with the translations. This is backed up by 10 wide-ranging essays from an international team of experts that provide cultural contexts and address the controversial questions, including the most likely battle site.

The book aims to be useful and interesting to both the educated lay reader and the most specialised academics – a tough balance! The philological terms in one essay were beyond *my* ken!

Many books have been written on the subject over the years, but this will be the definitive text, and any new theories will need to be measured against its conclusion that the battle site is Bebington Heath, near Bromborough on the Wirral, Merseyside.

The earliest source is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and Brunanburh sits alongside Beowulf and Maldon in Old English poetic tradition. Yet, as is shown, the tales of the battle evolve over the years, to reflect the changing influences and interests, and possibly scribing errors and misinterpretations. For example, different sources give different King Anlafs leading the Viking army, and in some the King of the Scots is killed and in others he survives! Athelstan himself is portrayed both as a great divinely-inspired hero and an illegitimate, nasty piece of work who murders his own brother. We see that over 100 years later, the conquering Normans were not overly keen to celebrate a major Anglo-Saxon victory, and Middle English romances have Guy of Warwick winning the day in single combat with an African giant. The resurgence of interest in all things Anglo-Saxon in the Victorian period led to the battle's re-emergence, including Alfred, Lord Tennyson reworking the poem and Charles Dickens quoting it in children's history books.

The *Casebook* will be of interest to many forteans as an exemplar of how to undertake research into legends of the past, as it goes back to original sources and weighs the evidence thoroughly and transparently, taking into account the contemporary historical context throughout. Several of the detailed sub-stories, such as Anlaf entering Athelstan's tent disguised as a minstrel, to learn of the Anglo-Saxon battle plans, are embellishments, some harking back to earlier legends.

My favourite source is the Icelandic *Egil's Saga*; Egil is a figure of historical record. He and his brother Thorolf fight in the vanguard of Athelstan's forces, bravely despatching the enemy before Thorolf is ambushed and slain. Egil wreaks appropriate vengeance and contributes greatly to Athelstan's victory. But as A Keith Kelly's essay highlights, the re-telling of sagas is participatory with the audience, where truth is interpreted relative to contemporary ideas and perceptions; therefore, what is perceived as true is true. As Kelly indicates: don't let the facts get in the way of a good story!

At the time of the battle, the north and west of the Wirral was a Norse enclave, originally settled by Vikings driven out of Ireland the previous century. The purported battle site is almost on the boundary separating the enclave from its Anglo-Saxon neighbours, so both armies would have had their backs to their respective communities. The place-name issues, local folklore and topographical factors provide the strongest of cases for Bebington Heath, with all other candidates from across Britain being rejected.

The inevitable question is why hasn't there been any physical/archæological evidence? The simple answer is that the poor soil and sandstone means that anything remaining after the battle – corpses and weapons – would not have sunk deep into the ground, and hence would have lain on the surface, open to the elements and to human and animal scavenging. Over time, all would have been removed by a variety of means. Nevertheless, the sound of curses and the violent swinging of iron still takes place on the battle site – it is now Brackenwood golf course!

**Rob Gandy**

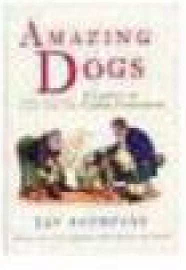
**Fortean Times Verdict**
**AN EXEMPLAR FOR RESEARCHING HISTORICAL LEGENDS** **9**

### Amazing Dogs

**A Cabinet of Canine Curiosities**

*Jan Bondeson*

Amberley 2011
Hb 286pp illus index, bib, £20.00, ISBN 9781848689466
**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £18.00**



Bondeson's entertaining and copiously illustrated compilation of canine lore ranges from the well known (such as Greyfriars Bobby and the Black Dog) to the obscure including: terriers slaughtering prodigious numbers of rodents in rat-pits; dogs that collected for charity by selectively targeting affluent rail travellers; and canine performers that make those on today's talent shows seem decidedly lacklustre.

The wealth of detail, the comprehensive historical research and well-written, compelling anecdotes make *Amazing Dogs* an important contribution to the cynological literature. As Bondeson points out, some of the remarkable stories are not as unlikely as they sound. Talking dogs, for example, really do seem to possess the ability to imitate some tones in human speech, especially vowels. On the other hand, Bondeson makes a compelling case against some aspects of folklore – such as the "very feeble foundations" supporting Greyfriars Bobby and other dogs supposedly keeping a vigil by their master's graves, which seem to owe more to "human credulity than canine fidelity".

Dogs and humans co-evolved for at least 15,000 years. Over this time, our canine companions became remarkably adept at reading subtle changes in human behaviour. *Amazing Dogs* is a fitting tribute to canine social intelligence – and an eloquent warning against both underestimating animals' mental prowess and overestimating human perspicacity.

*Amazing Dogs* is great fun and endlessly fascinating. You'd be barking mad to miss this one.

**Mark Greener**

**Fortean Times Verdict**
**YOU'D BE BARKING MAD TO MISS THIS FUN COLLECTION** **9**

# ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

### I FORT THE LORE

*Paul Screeton*

CFZ Press (cfz.org.uk) 2011
Pb, pp288, illus, £12.50
ISBN 9781905723683

Here is an anthology of writings by Paul Screeton from a wide range of publications. The oldies among us remember him as one of the early editors of *The Ley Hunter*, but his interests extended across the board to forteana, cryptozoology, and folklore (as explored in his *Folklore Frontiers* zine).

Paul has been actively commenting on these topics since the early 1970s; *vide* the photo of him with John Michell and other stars of the 'earth mysteries' scene at the famous 'Mystic's Picnic' in 1971, which was the ancestor of the Glastonbury Festival. His commentaries form a kind of natural history of a whole generation which grew up with world music, New Age mysticism, UFOs and abductions, ley hunting, weird cults, computers and videos, and naughty cigarettes. It is all recorded in Paul's earthy Northern plainspeak (often in lurid or hilarious detail), sometimes making the most unexpected of connections.

### GRASSROOTS UFOS

*Robert John Langdon*

ABC Publishing (abc-publishing-group.co.uk) 2010
Pb, pp203, index, bib, illus, £14.99
ISBN 9781933665535

Michael Swords (a professor of natural science at Western Michigan University) and John Timmerman (an editor and businessman) both have long associations with J Allen Hynek's famous Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS). On behalf of CUFOS, Timmerman curated a special exhibition about UFOs and toured it around the USA for around 12 years; during which many thousands of (mostly) ordinary people came to see it and ask questions. This book was compiled by Swords from transcriptions of over 1,200 taped interviews from visitors to the exhibit. Their experiences, in their own words, describe a huge variety of types of sightings, objects and their behaviour, and some attendant weird phenomena (including tiny objects, shape-changers, unnatural light, curious entities) and close encounters (but, curiously, very few abductions). There is much here that will be new to old hands too.

### BEYOND: ON LIFE AFTER DEATH

*Fred M Frohock*

University Press of Kansas (kansaspress.ku.edu) 2010
Hb, pp240, index, bib, notes, £27.50
ISBN 9780700617012

Books discussing 'life after death' are so numerous now that shelves can bow under their collective weight. We suggest that this is not a bad thing, as the subject is so complex and involves so many subjective areas that having a good range of opinions can actually provide perspective and balance.

That is, if you find some trustworthy writers; and that's a big 'if', as many are biased by religious or occult worldviews or quite militant in their advocacy. It's not hard, though, to find experienced researchers who can provide a balanced assessment that is worth reading; Frohock – a professor of political science at the University of Miami and author of eight books in this general area – seems to be one. His thinking, clearly expressed, about reincarnation, near-death experiences and apparent evidence that consciousness may be independent of the body, is that this ultimate 'survival' may be an evolutionary development.

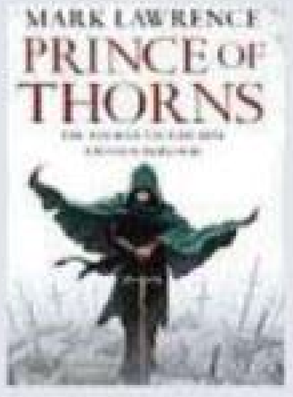
A fresh view, well presented.

## FORTEAN FICTION

### Prince of Thorns

*Mark Lawrence*

Harper Voyager, 2011
Hb pp384, £14.99
ISBN 9780007423293



Prince Jorg Ancrath is the psychotic teenage leader of a band of murderous outlaws who think nothing of feeding their enemies' eyeballs to them. Jorg dreams of revenge, of the throne usurped from him, and will stop at nothing to get it back. An intriguing read, *Prince of Thorns* (part one of a planned series) brings to mind Wolfe's Severian, Martin's now trademark throwaway brutality and Moorcock's *Hawkmoon* series; its world is a somehow familiar, yet skewed, alternative Europe, here peppered with quotations from Shakespeare and references to Greek literature; a post-catastrophe Earth where what appear to be missile silo vaults share cavern space with ghostly necromancers. The novel will probably stand or fall on your reaction to Jorg's narrative, with its relentlessly dark, first-person consciousness. Perhaps there isn't enough light to counterbalance the oppressive shadows, while intricate, telling detail sometimes loses out to the novel's striving for overall pace – which it undoubtedly achieves. I sometimes struggled to get a clear sense of the other characters. Another potentially polarising aspect of the book is that behind its black smokescreen of barbaric events and glib cynicism, it actually smacks of a moral tale, a subtext of how Jorg was forged by his upbringing, environment and circumstance. It's a fantasy stab at sympathy for the hoodie, a brutal because brutalised young boy, abandoned by father and society. I confess that sometimes I just longed for the cocky little bastard to be strung up. It's a big demand to expect a reader to empathise with a lead character so very unsympathetic, but Lawrence is to be applauded for the ambition in this savage, contentious but impressive debut.

**Nick Čirkovič**

### PARANORMAL EASTBOURNE

*Janet Cameron*

Amberley Publishing (amberleybooks.com) 2010,
Pb, pp128, illus, £12.99
ISBN 9781848689961

### PARANORMAL NORFOLK

*Frank Meeres*

Amberley Publishing (amberleybooks.com) 2010,
Pb, pp128, illus, £12.99
ISBN 9781848684713

### PARANORMAL DERBYSHIRE

*Jill Armitage*

Amberley Publishing (amberleybooks.com) 2010,
Pb, pp128, illus, £12.99
ISBN 9781445600819

### PARANORMAL OXFORD

*Ross Andrews*

Amberley Publishing (amberleybooks.com) 2010,
Pb, pp128, illus, £12.99
ISBN 9781445600024

One of the great mainstays of the small publishing industry of the last few decades has been the steady flow of regional guides. Here we have the first four titles in their 'Paranormal' series from Amberley, one of the most successful of small publishers of history books. Written in breezy style and full of the information you will need if you are visiting and interested in ghosts, folklore, and some gruesome moments in local history.

It may be that ghosts are more frequent than other types of paranormal phenomena as they certainly haunt these pages in greater numbers. And there's some stranger stuff of additional interest to forteans – UFO encounters, phantom animals and planes, and even a few odd falls. Local libraries should certainly carry these kinds of books because they preserve aspects of our past that can so quickly vanish from modern awareness.

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS AND GAMES TO:
THE EDITOR, **FORTEAN TIMES**, DENNIS CONSUMER DIVISION,
30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD, UK.

## The Human Centipede 2: Full Sequence

Dir Tom Six, Netherlands, UK, USA 2011
On UK release from 4 November

Is it possible to make a dangerous film? The British Board of Film Classification seemed to think so earlier this year, taking the unusual step of refusing director Tom Six's follow-up to his notorious *The Human Centipede* a certificate on the grounds that it posed "a real, as opposed to a fanciful, risk that harm is likely to be caused to potential viewers". Then, after a complete U-turn, *The Human Centipede 2: Full Sequence* emerged onto British cinema screens, shorn of two minutes 37 seconds; those dangerous bits, then, included the sight of a man masturbating with sandpaper (ouch) and wrapping barbed wire around his penis (before raping the woman unlucky enough to be Tail End Charlie in the centipede; which *is* apparently OK for us to see). While I'm touched that the BBFC, unlike the film's reckless protagonist, has such concern for our willies and what we might do to (rather than with) them, I, for one, would rather take my chances with the uncut version. Dafter viewers, though, would obviously try these things at home.

Anyway, it's obvious that Six had the BBFC in his sights from the start, setting out to make a movie (with UK funding) that would press all their buttons; he also, though, seems to have deliberately pre-empted their own silly argument: *THC2* begins with a downtrodden underground garage attendant called Martin (Laurence R Harvey) – a pop-eyed, overweight, mentally challenged, asthmatic sort-of-midget; so, your typical horror film fanboy, then – becoming aroused by watching a DVD of *THC1* on a laptop in his office. To demonstrate the BBFC notion of cause and effect at work, his next act is to whack an innocent couple with a crowbar as they try to retrieve their car. He wants, you see, to emulate the crazed Dr Heiter of the film by making his own human centipede, but three times as long – yes, that's an impressive 12 victims, joined bottom-to-mouth!

Where the first film was a conventional enough horror flick constructed from the victims' point of view, *THC2* has no interest in its suffering ciphers ("All actors are centipedes," as Hitch might have said), and sticks to the perspective of the tormentor. The next 50 minutes follow Martin's efforts to assemble his materials; ludicrously, for a retarded loser who can't speak, he manages to lure one of the first film's 'stars' to England by promising her a part in a Tarantino movie; just one of the silly plot contrivances that scupper any sense of reality. This is intercut with faux-kitchen-sink scenes of Martin's home life with his ghastly old mum. It's made clear that he was fiddled with as a child by his father, thus introducing some kind of centipede metaphor for the cycle of abuse.

The rest of the film details his efforts to create his masterpiece. And if you'd been wondering how this grunting idiot was going to replicate the efforts of a trained surgeon, well, that's where the 'fun' begins as we watch him toiling gamely away with staple gun and duct tape to realise his DIY dream. To be honest, it's a blackly amusing conceit, but the ensuing torrent of blood and shit will leave few laughing. Instead, it will undoubtedly shock people, as Six so desperately wants it to, and the film's infantile nature becomes increasingly clear, culminating in a scene where a gleeful, gurgling Martin induces a sort of 'Mexican fart' through the length of his human centipede.

At this point, the figure of Martin seemed to me to change from an image of the film's imagined viewer to one of its actual director. Despite its faux-arty black and white photography and nihilistic posturings, *The Human Centipede 2* is ultimately nothing more than a gigantic, noxious fart in the faces of censors and audience alike.

While this a dull and dispiriting film, it earns an extra point for the immortal line: "There's a midget having a wank in there!"

**David Sutton**

**Fortean Times Verdict**
**I'D RATHER SANDPAPER MY KNOB THAN WATCH THIS AGAIN** **3**

## Another Earth

Dir Mike Cahill, US 2011
On UK release from 2 December

For movie makers, a car crash is a powerful plot device, bringing characters together, transforming lives, unleashing events. In *Another Earth*, a carefree astronomy student is driving alone at night, gazing up at a newly-discovered planet instead of the road; she smashes into a car stopped at the lights, killing a mother and child and putting John, the father, in a coma.

Fast forward a few years, and Rhoda is leaving prison. Now a disturbed recluse, she gets a job as a school janitor. Returning home late on the anniversary of the crash she sees victim John, now out of his coma, at the site of the accident and follows him home. The next day, she returns to his house, meaning to apologise, but she loses her nerve and poses as a cleaner. Before losing his family, John had been a famous composer and university professor, but now he prefers to drink; his house is a mess. A relationship soon develops…

*Another Earth* is a film about seeking redemption and finding your own peace. For all the supposed intelligence of its protagonists, its insights are more of the self-help, New Age variety, delivered via voice-over and an old Zen janitor who pours bleach into his eyes and ears. It's all far less profound than it thinks it is.

It might be easier to take the philosophising seriously were the film not so frustratingly implausible. The characters' behaviour and relationship ring false, the narrative is ripped through with plot holes, and no effort is made to make sense of the science. In fact, the idea that there is a second Earth near our own – an identical copy of us – seems for most of the film to serve absolutely no purpose beyond that of a photogenic backdrop. Rhoda wants to escape there, but as it seems the Rhoda on Earth 2 will have made the same mistakes and will now be cleaning the same school toilets, her logic seems a little shaky. The idea of Earth 2 seems entirely unconnected to the plot until the very end of the film, when it suddenly becomes clear that it exists to set up a final twist.

And yet, *Another Earth* is strangely engrossing. It has an appealing Fifties-style sense of wonder at the Cosmos, a deliberately haunting soundtrack, and it looks exquisite. Crucially, the emotions may not be believable but they are unremittingly intense, and the wrongness of the unfurling events and the constant expectation that Rhoda must be discovered create a tension that grips despite the film's many flaws.

**Jen Ogilvie**

**Fortean Times Verdict**
**NOT THE FILM YOU WANT IT TO BE, BUT WORTH A LOOK** **6**

## The Guardian

Dir William Friedkin, US 1990
Second Sight, £17.99

William Friedkin proved his horror chops with *The Exorcist*, but even he admits that this effort from 1990 is nowhere near as good.

It's a tale fuelled by yuppie paranoia. How do you cope when the nanny is a nightmare? In this case, the hired help is Camilla, played by a smarmy Jenny Seagrove. She seems perfect (namely, English and upper class) but her CV neglects to mention that she's a tree-worshipping druid who needs the baby's blood for a sacrifice.

The husband suspects something's up but not before the nanny is despatching anyone who might get in her way. When the trees start eating people, you know you're in pure B-Movie territory. Yet Friedkin still pulls off some strong and spooky moments. *Antichrist*-style shots of Camilla lounging naked on tree branches while coyotes roam in the mist have a nightmarish fairytale feel (genre snob Friedkin insists this is *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, not horror). There's also a genuinely thrilling set piece when a nosy character hoping for a date with Camilla is pursued through the woods by coyotes back to his plush house.

Yet it's the blatant supernatural elements that sink the film into moments of unintentional humour. Jenny Seagrove flying through the trees or punching through doors, *Terminator*-style, made me laugh out loud.

Ironically, the film Friedkin should have been more influenced by was not *The Exorcist* but *The Omen* (a.k.a. 'The Exorcist for Protestants'). The strength of that film was that both supernatural and natural explanations were plausible: maybe it was the Devil's child, or just a string of horrible, coincidental accidents. *The Guardian* could have shone with that sort of subtlety. If Friedkin had dropped the animatronic trees, he would have had a story where the nanny could have been either a magical druid or just a psychotic baby killer; it would have been more chilling then. Two years after the film's release, *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* told a similar story with no supernatural elements at all and was a massive hit.

That said, it's an enjoyable ride and an unexpected 1990s time capsule. Jack Hughes (from Friedkin's favourite 80s band *Wang Chung*) provides the fun soundtrack, and cultural giants like *The Golden Girls*, *Family Ties* and *Roseanne* get a mention. The extras are great too – straightforward but fascinating interviews, in which Friedkin admits that he made this as a favour for an old agent friend of his. Yet despite being in the long shadow of his masterpiece, perhaps even because of it, *The Guardian* is still worth a look.

**Rev. Peter Laws**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**HARDLY THE EXORCIST, BUT STILL A GOOD DEAL OF FUN** **6**

## V: Season 2

Dir Bryan Spicer, Steve Shill et al, US 2010
Warner Home Entertainment, £17.99/£27.99

Well, they did it – they managed to do what the Fifth Column led by the rangy and resourceful FBI counter-terrorist agent Erica Evans (Catherine Mitchell) could not: faced with the apparently friendly but ultimately malign arrival of extraterrestrial beings masked by an outer human skin and headed by the irresistible alien queen Anna (Morena Baccarin), they killed them off. Right at the height of its story development, two seasons in, the plug was pulled on *V* because it wasn't finding enough viewers among its demographic on the network. So, it went to that great mid-series cancellation graveyard in the sky, along with the likes of *The Sarah Connor Chronicles* and *Flashforward*.

So why bother to shell out cash for something you know remains incomplete? There are a few reasons: the second season's action has a harder edge to it, as the niceties of morality are ditched for the sake of survival; duplicity among key characters keeps the plot and the cast on its toes; there's decent drama when protective matriarchal aggression is roused, and human-alien hybrids perpetrate fratricide; ruminations on the existence of a soul are dallied with; suggestions that this is part allegory for the Obama administration (denied by the makers); and a big secret is revealed in the final episode (well, I didn't see it coming).

A reimagining of the original 1983 miniseries of the same name, *V* even has a cameo from Jane Badler, the previous alien queen, famous for snacking on live rats. Despite extremely clunky plot-exposition emerging out of the mouths of the characters, this *V* was turning into rollicking TV SF carried by two very strong female leads. A petition to save the series has been sent to Warner Bros, but somehow you can't see it happening. The world could have been doomed or saved in another season, but at the end of these 10 episodes, we are left, tantalisingly, staring at the sky.

**Nick Ćirkovič**

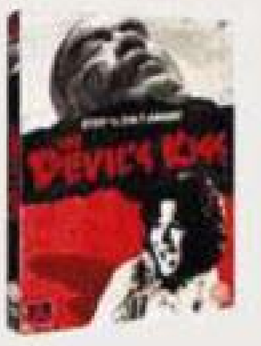
**Fortean Times Verdict**

**ANOTHER RATINGS CASUALTY WHICH HAD REAL PROMISE** **7**

# SHORTS

### DEVIL'S KISS

(Second Sight, £6.99)



An Elvira-lookalike medium seeks revenge for her husband's death with the help of a horny midget, a bald Frankenstein's monster and a mad doctor with heart problems. Sounds promising; yet somehow there's a whiff of tedium to it all. There are things to like, though; the late Silvia Solar plays the vengeful widow with narrowed-eye style and the film crams in as many exploitation tricks as possible – dancing go-go girls (tick), demented occult rituals (tick). It's fun, but the feeling of affection it leaves you with is more for 70s Euro-horror in general than for *Devil's Kiss* itself. **Rev. PL 5/10**

### EVIL THINGS

(Scanbox Entertainment, £9.99)

This 'found footage' film moves in mysterious ways. What starts as a camcorder version of Spielberg's *Duel* (college friends are followed to a remote country house by an ominous-looking van) turns *Blair Witch* as they get lost walking in the woods, but then it makes its own mark with a neat little twist about 50 minutes in. The baffling final moments however, left me somewhere between irritated and intrigued. The actors are earnest enough and for a horror film they're a surprisingly 'nice' bunch (no drugs, no sex, no swearing until they start freaking out). It's a film worth watching just to see if you hate it. Once I got over the frustration, I was left with an odd admiration for the sheer ambiguity of it all. **Rev. PL 5/10**

### 51

(After Dark Originals, £15.99/£19.99)

A spoiler for *Area 51*—the upcoming Oren Peli film—this Syfy TV movie knock-off has been helmed by son-of-Bond Jason Connery and stars *Babylon 5*'s Bruce Boxleitner. Journalists are invited into Area 51 to prove aliens don't exist (what a wise move!), just as the captured aliens stage a prison break (naturally). The stars and plot are lifted from countless other science fiction movies and TV shows, but it just about passes muster as a cheapo TV movie: a good idea thrown away due to poor production values. Don't expect to find any alien secrets revealed here… **Brian J Robb 2/10**

### PANIC BUTTON

(Cine Britannia, £17.99/£24.99)

In this neat little Welsh-produced horror-thriller, four young people win a competition run by social networking site all2togethr.com; but then their trip of a lifetime to NYC becomes an ordeal at the hands of a madman bent on stripping away their online identities and getting at the dark secrets (dodgy porn, snuff movies) lurking behind their avatars. The movie gets a good deal out of the disjunction between jolly online community and the angst and self-loathing of individual users; the crocodialian gamesmaster soon strips away any illusion of them being 'all2togthr', reducing each of the four to nothing more than snivelling individuals intent on saving their own skins by stabbing each other in the back (literally, sometimes). Personally, I'd never board a private jet if a woman who looked like Rosa Klebb asked me to hand over my mobile first. **DS 6/10**

## Rage

PC £34.99 XBox360 PS3, £49.99, id Software/Bethesda

Imagine the creators of *Doom*, *Quake* and *Wolfenstein* in cahoots with the makers of *The Elder Scrolls* and *Fallout* and you could be looking at a match made in post-apocalyptic gaming heaven. Id have brought all of their FPS mastery of yore to the making of *Rage*, while the Bethesda influence offers a post-asteroid strike Earth in the same condition of grungy, irradiated dilapidation familiar to anyone who has gone walkabout in *Fallout 3*.

But for all its impressive trappings, for all the fine detail of the non-combatants with whom you come into contact, the wastelands and shanty towns and major conurbations of barter and blood-letting you stroll into, for all the tweaking and upgrading of armour and weaponry you can tinker with here, the fundamental appeal of *Rage* can be reduced to just three letters: FPS. And when it comes to first person shooters, id have serious previous. Its ultimate success or otherwise as a single player campaign (maybe 10–12 hours overall) is largely down to whether all those trappings either enhance or hamper blasting the crap out of everything that moves with flair and abandon.

The storyline is as denuded as the landscape: you wake up with a major world headache in this one; the only survivor in a cryogenic smash-up, your unfortunate comrades turned to dried fruits in their hibernation pods.

The world has changed; we spent our time worrying about the euro crisis, global warming and the unreal expectations the *X-Factor* encourages in the disenfranchised young, and then it all just went blam, anyway, when a bloody great asteroid hit.

Mad Max has gone way beyond Thunderdome in this particular future, and there is little else for a former super-soldier to do but drive around – having been invited to do so by a motley assortment of NPCs offering rewards – in souped-up demolition derby wheels and, on arrival, start killing stuff before the stuff starts killing him. Mutants, bandits, motor-cross madmen – they're all here. As are some stock old faithfuls in the weaponry stakes: pistol, shottie, machine gun, sniper rifle, crossbow, with the addition of more finicky killing friends like explosive bots and the wingstick, a three-bladed boomerang capable of giving enemies a very nasty haircut. Id know how to give their stock weaponry that good, solid clunking 'kill feel', and one of the game's greatest strengths is the enhancements you can add to these vanilla friends: extended ammo clips and Pulse Rounds for the shotgun, 'Fat Boys' – juicy, high-calibre rounds – for the pistol, and so on. You can even resort to fisticuffs if you feel like it.

As you would expect from an id Software title, it's in its gunplay that *Rage* truly excels. There's a back-to-basics, arcade feel to the firefights – except that there's nothing basic about id's Tech 5 engine, or AI that simply refuses to charge at you in a straight line and will have you climbing up the wall (while it does, literally, that) as you blast precious ammo away. This is splatter-gun savagery of the very highest order. When it's not having an identity crisis, this FPS is hard to beat. For all its rusty, sun-scarred open environments and its Mega Texture processing, this game is essentially about running down corridors and killing things. Aye, there's the rub; because it also tacks on a *Motorstorm*-style driving element and a cursory bit of RPG, which, as the game progresses and levels are recycled, simply gets in the way of the gunplay.

Mercifully, we are spared portentous cutaways and cod-philosophy from game story writers who think they are Dostoyevsky. And if you like driving around in assorted customised wheels, the odd race here and there, then all well and good (the multiplayer is essentially made for boy racers – surprising given the FPS pedigree of the game's creators – although there is also a two-player co-op mode thrown in). But having to drive to places all the time just to kill stuff has an irksome element of "Are we there yet?" about it. It's not the sort of repetition you might necessarily welcome; unlike repeatedly shooting things with varying degrees of skill, which you probably will. This is especially true when the driving is a far less sophisticated affair than the shooting. The bandages in your inventory seem somewhat redundant alongside the game's self-heal element (oh, for the days of *Medal of Honor*, dying to find those thin-on-the-ground health packs on Omaha Beach), indicative of the cursory RPG nod, but the self-help defibrillator is a neat touch (and rather welcome during a near-death experience when a mutant is breathing oblivion down your throat).

At its best, *Rage* is the most satisfying brain blaster you'll have the pleasure to play in a long while (until, perhaps, the imminent arrival of *Serious Sam 3* in all its unreconstructed, Arnie-style arcade killing glory). It has a classic FPS feel to it – old, rolled gaming gold when you've a gun in your virtual hand – but now burnished by slick, streamlined, up-to-the-minute gaming engine technology. There are moments when *Rage* incites the wrong sort of anger, but these are quickly forgotten when you plunge into yet another flying-bullets-and-limbs FPS maelstrom.

**Nick Čirkovič**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**KILLING IN THE FIRST PERSON IS ALL THE RAGE AGAIN** **7**

SPIRAL
FREEFONE
0500 000 880
FREE
CATALOGUE
WWW.SPIRALDIRECT.COM
A
B
C
D
E
F
FOLLOW SPIRAL ON FACEBOOK, MYSPACE, YOUTUBE & TWITTER
G
H
I
J
SPEND OVER £20 AND GET A FREE T-SHIRT

| Ref NAME | CODE | SIZES | DESCRIPTION | PRICE | Ref NAME | CODE | SIZES | DESCRIPTION | PRICE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A = SHEWOLF RAGE | DW188600 | XXL XL L M S | T-SHIRT | £12.99 | F = VAMPIRE'S KISS | DT205700 | XXL XL L M | LONGSLEEVE | £13.99 |
| B = SPELLBINDER | LG173147 | XL L M S | LS NECK STRAP | £16.99 | G = FATAL BEAUTY | TR319275 | XL L M S | 1SHLDR BATWING | £18.99 |
| C = ENSLAVED ANGEL | DT195521 | L M S | WHITE BABYGROW | £9.99 | H = SPELLBINDER | LG173880 | XXL XL L M | SLVLESS WORKSHIRT | £19.99 |
| D = DRAGON WIGGLE | FM127520 | L M S | BLACK BABYGROW | £9.99 | I = DEAD BEATS | TR318280 | XL L M S | WHITE CAPSLV | £11.99 |
| E = BIRTH OF THE PHOENIX | TR321130 | L M S | SLVLESS RED | £6.99 | J = HYDRA SKULL | DS121622 | XXL XL L M | CHARCOAL TS | £12.99 |

COMPLETE THE ORDER FORM BELOW, DETACH & POST TO US WITH YOUR CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER TO: SPIRAL DIRECT LTD, SPIRAL HOUSE, 29 - 35 GLADSTONE ROAD, CROYDON, SURREY, CR0 2BQ.
OR BY CREDIT CARD SIMPLY ORDER ON OUR FREEPHONE HOTLINE 0500 000 880 DURING 10AM & 8PM WEEKDAYS. WWW.SPIRALDIRECT.COM

## Order Form

BIZARRE SEPTEMBER 2011

| CODE | PRODUCT | SIZE | QTY | VALUE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TR160123 | EXAMPLE<br>One Shoulder | L | 1 | 11.99 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

*PLEASE ADD 95P + £1 PER ITEM FOR POSTAGE & PACKAGING (E.G. 2 ITEMS = £2.95)

**SPIRAL GUARANTEE !**

FULL REFUND OR EXCHANGE WITHIN 10 DAYS OF PURCHASE IF YOU ARE NOT FULLY SATISFIED.

*P & P £

TOTAL £

PLEASE CONTINUE ORDER ON A SEPERATE SHEET IF REQUIRED

NAME TEL NO

ADDRESS

POSTCODE COUNTRY

PAYMENT METHOD: *SIGNATURE

CHEQUE(UK ONLY) ☐ POSTAL ORDER ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ VISA ☐ MAESTRO ☐ AMEX ☐

CREDIT CARD NUMBER :

START DATE EXPIRY DATE ISSUE No CVV2 No

CVV2 = THE LAST 3 DIGITS ON REVERSE OF CARD (4 DIGITS FOR AMEX)

SPEND OVER £20 & GET A QUALITY T-SHIRT FREE>>

MEN'S (BLACK) ☐ XL ☐ L ☐ M

LADIES' (BLACK) ☐ L ☐ M ☐ S

ALCHEMY 1977

ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE

Alchemy Metal-Wear
UL13 & UL17
Alchemy Gothic
Alchemy Empire
Alchemy Poker
Alchemy England Apparel
Alchemy Studios Custom Shop

For Alchemy 1977 Alternative
Lifestyle Catalogue pack.
Send £3.00 to The Closet,
Alchemy, Hazel Drive
Leicester LE3 2JE
or
Free if you register on line at:
**www.closetalchemy.com**

**WWW.ALCHEMY1977.COM**

Please quote **FT1111** when responding to this advert.

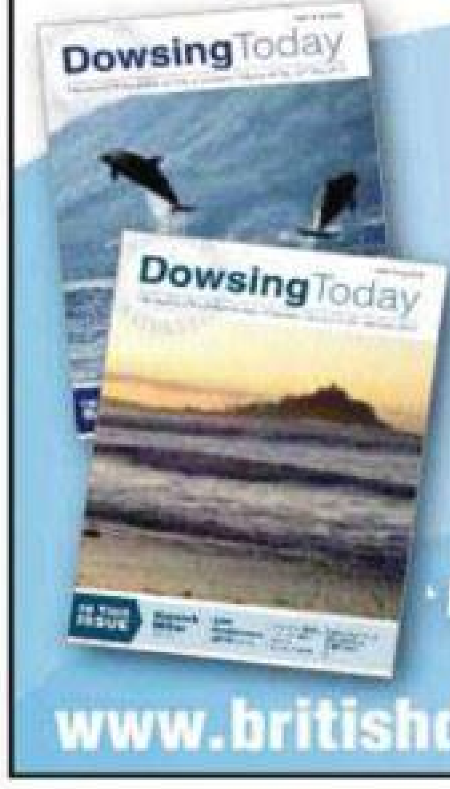
For nearly 90 years The Atlantis Bookshop has been a leading outlet for all things Fortean, esoteric and magical.

In addition to books, workshops, classes, exhibitions and readings, our gallery offers an exciting selection of esoteric and magical art.

Follow in the footsteps of those who know.

THE ATLANTIS BOOKSHOP
49a Museum Street London WC1A 1LY • 020 7405 2120
www.theatlantisbookshop.com • atlantis@theatlantisbookshop.com

From Mystery… To Mastery


Dowsing Today
Dowsing Today

**Dowsing Courses**

- Foundation for absolute beginners and novices
- Environmental Healing
- Earth Energies & Geopathic Stress
- Dowsing for Health
- Water Divining

Special offer! Join BSD now and receive our free magazine & e-newsletter

'At the heart of dowsing since 1933'

www.britishdowsers.org 01684 576969

**How We Were Made**

A book of revelations

**by William Neil**

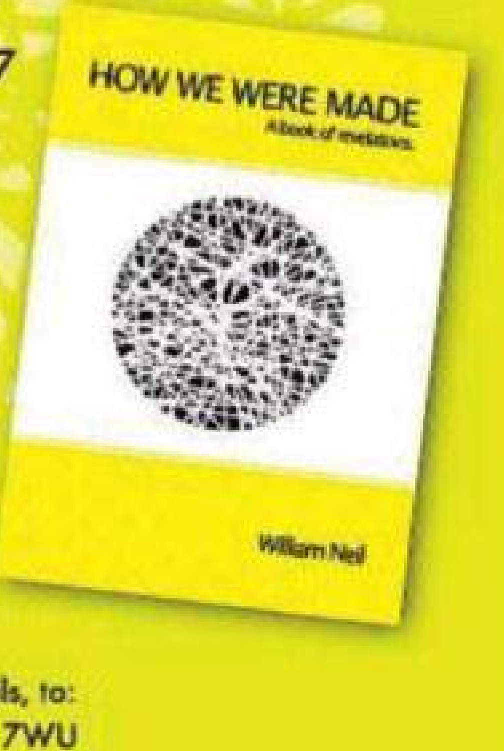
THIS IS A MUCH ENLARGED 4TH EDITION

*"…… Neil demonstrates a host of dazzling numerical correspondences, mostly extrapolated from the famous number 666; multiplied out (6 x 6 x 6), it gives a key number 216, which produces other fundamental constants when it is divided or multiplied. … Neil applies his findings to show how 666 and related numbers can be found in the human form… in monuments like the Great Pyramid and Stonehenge, in the Earth's position in the solar system, and in ancient and modern measuring systems. It can even be seen in the "building and placing" of the moon. … If you're fascinated by numbers and sacred geometry, this book will be a treat."*

**Nexus Magazine review, Aug/Sept 2007**

*"Highly recommended"*

**David Icke**


HOW WE WERE MADE
A book of revelations
William Neil

**Order this best seller now!**

ISBN 978-0-9545957-3-9
williamneil.co.uk
**Send a cheque or postal order for £15, with your details, to: Oracle Books. P.O. Box 2467, Reading, England, RG4 7WU**
**Also from Waterstone's, or any bookshop, and amazon.co.uk**

**FAMOUS SCRIBBLES**

**Authentic Film & Television Autographed Photos & Memorabilia**
**AFTAL Approved Dealer #72**

**www.famousscribbles.co.uk**
**Tel No: 01892 610384**

**AUTHORS**

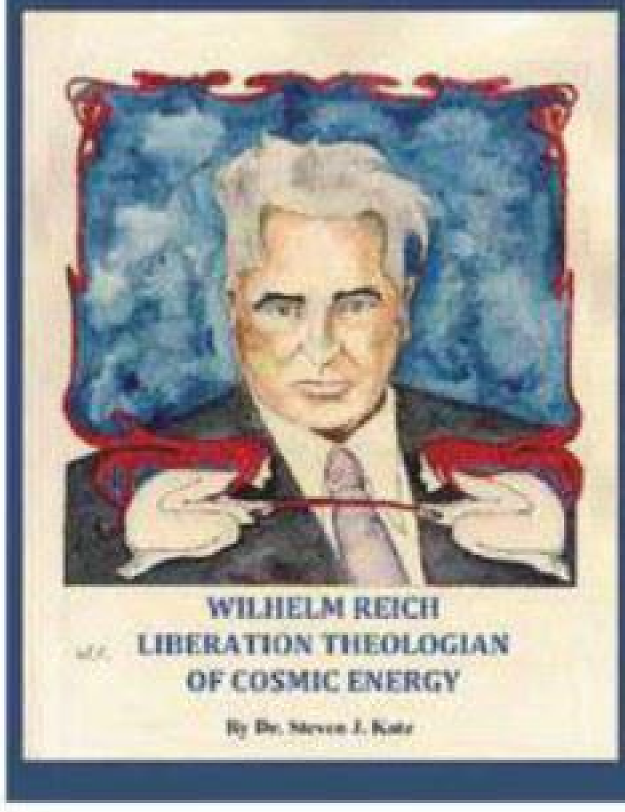
**PLEASE SUBMIT:**
**synopsis, plus sample chapters (3) for consideration.**

**Olympia Publishers**

www.olympiapublishers.com

60 Cannon Street, LONDON, EC4N 6NP

**LIBERATION THEOLOGIAN OF COSMIC ENERGY**


WILHELM REICH
LIBERATION THEOLOGIAN
OF COSMIC ENERGY
By Dr. Steven J. Katz

This work explores the spiritual implications of the last years of inventor, scientist and philosopher Dr. Wilhelm Reich. New facts are revealed about Dr. Reich's UFO contacts and his discovery of a metaphysical portal during the Oranur Experiment. This is the secret and suppressed evidence of Reich's major breakthrough into the occult.

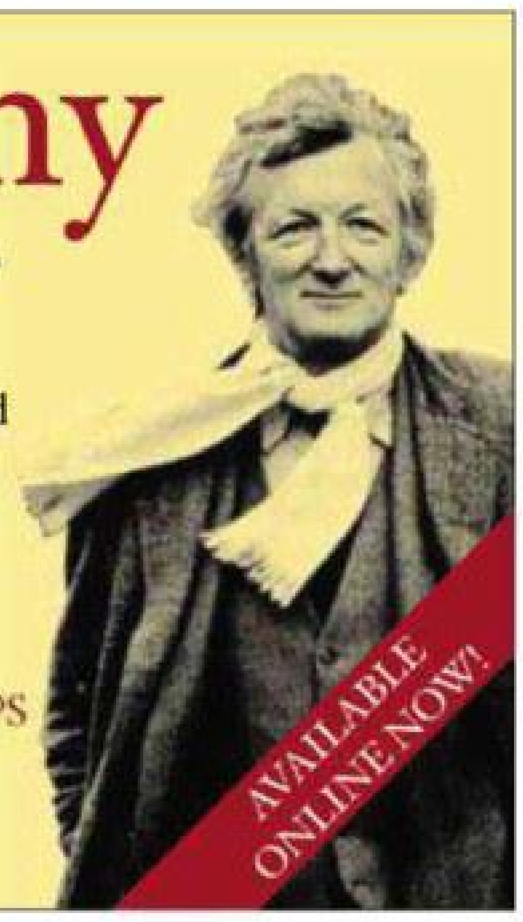
Available at
skatz.magcloud.com

Michellany

*A John Michell Reader*

A few copies now available to FT readers • Contributors include FT founder Bob Rickard & Rupert Sheldrake • Numbered memorial volume for family & friends • New material about the celebrated author of *A View Over Atlantis* & *Flying Saucer Vision*

NOT AVAILABLE IN BOOKSHOPS
Send name & address to:
michellany@johnmichell.com
www.johnmichell.com


AVAILABLE ONLINE NOW!

WWW.BLADES-UK.COM
Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm 0845 226 5514

also stock
Hell Boy
Batman
Back to the Future
World of Froud
Bleeding Edge
Planet of the Apes
Star Wars
Star Trek
Van Helsing
Marvel Comics
Bleeding Edge
Buffy
Hall of Horror
James Bond
Matrix
Scarface

Also Accept Paypal, Nochex, Moneybookers & cheques.

**TO ADVERTISE HERE**
Call
Ryan on
**0207 907 6763**

ZOMBIE - EAT FLESH
BACK TO THE FUTURE
NEW THE FIFTH ELEMENT INC. HEM PRINT
PULP FICTION
McJoker
TRON
ALIEN
LIFE OF BRIAN
HIGHLANDER
EVENT HORIZON INC. HEM PRINT
GLOW IN THE DARK
POLTERGEIST
RESIDENT EVIL
PULP FICTION
THE THING INC. BACK PRINT
NEW ROBOCOP
PSYCHO
EVIL DEAD
ALIENS
TOTAL RECALL
THE LOST BOYS
Zombieman/ZOD
FROM DUSK TILL...
FRIDAY THE 13TH
STARSHIP TROOPERS
GRAB A TOWEL FROM BATES MOTEL
PUFF INK
NEW HELLBOY

DO YOU KNOW YOUR MOVIES?

"Essential for any film fans wardrobe."
EMPIRE MAG

FREE TO ENTER DRAW
facebook.com/nerdoh
EVERY WEEK!!

PHONE ORDERS: 0115 8440088

nerdoh.com

ALWAYS FREE UK P&P

FOR MORE DISCUSSION ON FORTEAN TOPICS GO TO...
www.forteantimes.com/forum

CONTACT US BY POST: **BOX 2409 LONDON NW5 4NP**
OR E-MAIL **sieveking@forteantimes.com**
PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS

Dear FT...

# letters

## Gaddafi replaced?

The escape and subsequent capture of the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi is bound to revive rumours that he was really Lord Lucan (Richard John Bingham, 7th Earl of Lucan). Gaddafi – the *original* Gaddafi – became acquainted with Lucan at a West End gambling club in the mid-1960s when he underwent four months' military training in the UK, and they remained in contact even after Gaddafi seized power in 1969. Lucan went on the run in November 1974 after bludgeoning to death his children's nanny; Gaddafi was in hospital with a mystery illness throughout the winter of 1974–75 and when he re-emerged to public view he seemed to have aged 10 years (Lucan was born in 1934, Gaddafi in 1942). He also showed signs of botched plastic surgery and had started speaking an Arabic that sounded pretty weird to most Arabs (I recall Alfred Beeston, Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford University, remarking on this at the time). Lucan, of course, has never been seen (or at least recognised) since that period. Gaddafi could hardly be described as one of the most competent dictators, any more than Lucan could be described as a competent gambler.

**Trevor McGivern**
*London*

## O tempora, o mores!

In his article on the "Treasures of Heaven" exhibition [**FT279:48**] David Barrett quotes Joe Nickell of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry as saying that the highly revered Mandylion image of Christ's face could simply be classified as "type AB tempura paint". Scepticism is one thing, but as an art historian I beg leave to doubt that, however the holy icon may actually have been produced, it involved the delicious light batter used in Japanese cuisine for coating deep-fried food.

Presumably this is the work of a spell-checker that didn't recognise "tempera", the correct term for the kind of paint habitually used in panel painting before oil became the preferred medium. In fairness, the two substances can share an ingredient, as egg is sometimes used in tempura while egg yolk tends to be the most common binder in tempera. Both words are European in origin – tempura batter was introduced into Japan by Portuguese Jesuits in the 16th century, and the term probably refers to their *quattor tempora*, the holy days when meat was not eaten (sea-food and vegetables being well suited to the tempura style of cooking.) Thus the word ultimately derives from Latin roots relating to time, or a particular period of time. Tempera might also be a time-related term – this sort of paint is notoriously quick-drying – but is usually referred back to sources meaning to mix or mingle (which might be an equally suitable derivation for the batter).

• While we're being art historical, is there a prize for identifying the hauntingly beautiful figure being sculpted by Cellini in the 'Phenomenomix' cartoon [**FT277:79**] as actually being a rather later work – "Aphrodite at the Water-hole", as created by Tony Hancock in the 1961 film *The Rebel*?

**Gail-Nina Anderson**
*By email*

## Bemused

Responding to my statement [**FT277:17**] that a report of an alleged post-extinction great auk sighting "was undocumented until now in the crypto-literature", Peter Costello [**FT279:73**] points out that this had already been referred to in a footnote in the 1944 edition of Rupert Gould's book, *Oddities*. This caused me some bemusement, as *Oddities* (a book I know well), while certainly a fortean publication, is not a cryptozoological one.

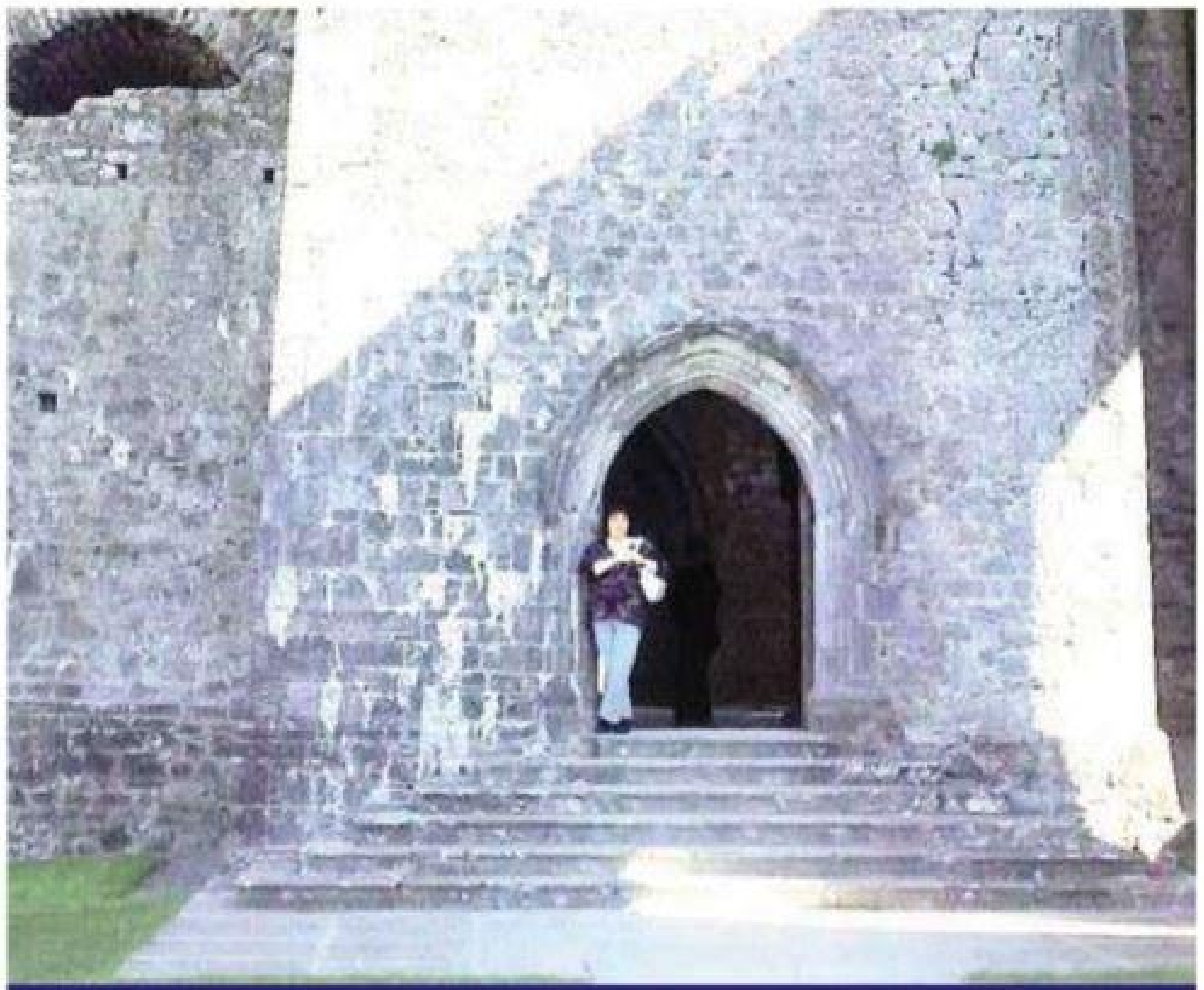
**Karl Shuker**
*Wednesbury, West Midlands*

## Jesus on a shovel

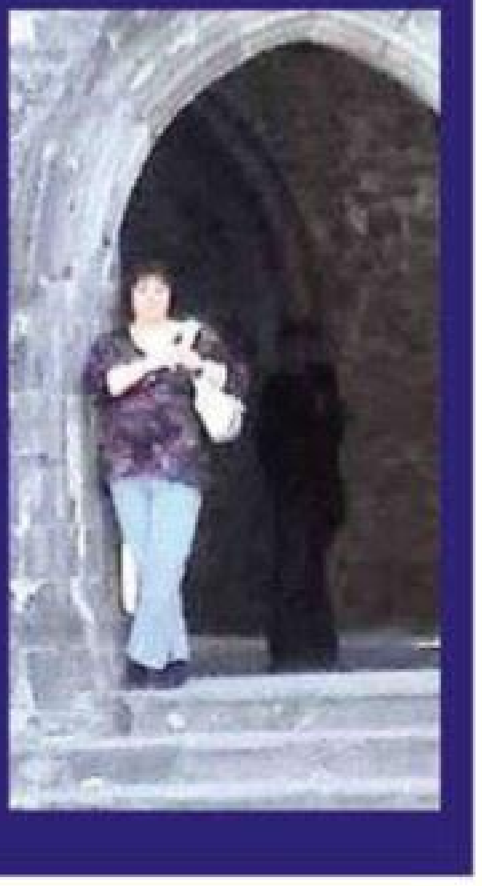
The vision of Jesus Christ [**FT279:10**] on a shovel was lost on me. All I could see was a slightly troglodyte face, with large jutting jaw and big nose. This may be due to my agnostic tendencies. In the interests of unbiased research, I asked my colleague (without letting him read the text) what picture he saw on the shovel. Despite being in the middle of reading the New Testament (I had interrupted his study), he said he saw a troll with a big nose. Even when I said it was supposedly Jesus, he still couldn't see the resemblance. However, if you turn it upside down, you might be able to see a storm trooper from *Star Wars*.

**Louise Champion**
*New Malden, Surrey*

**Editor's note:** It's become a cliché that every simulacrum of a bearded man is Jesus, just as every likeness of a veiled woman is His Mum. *FT* feels it is superfluous to ridicule this convention.



## Strange silhouette



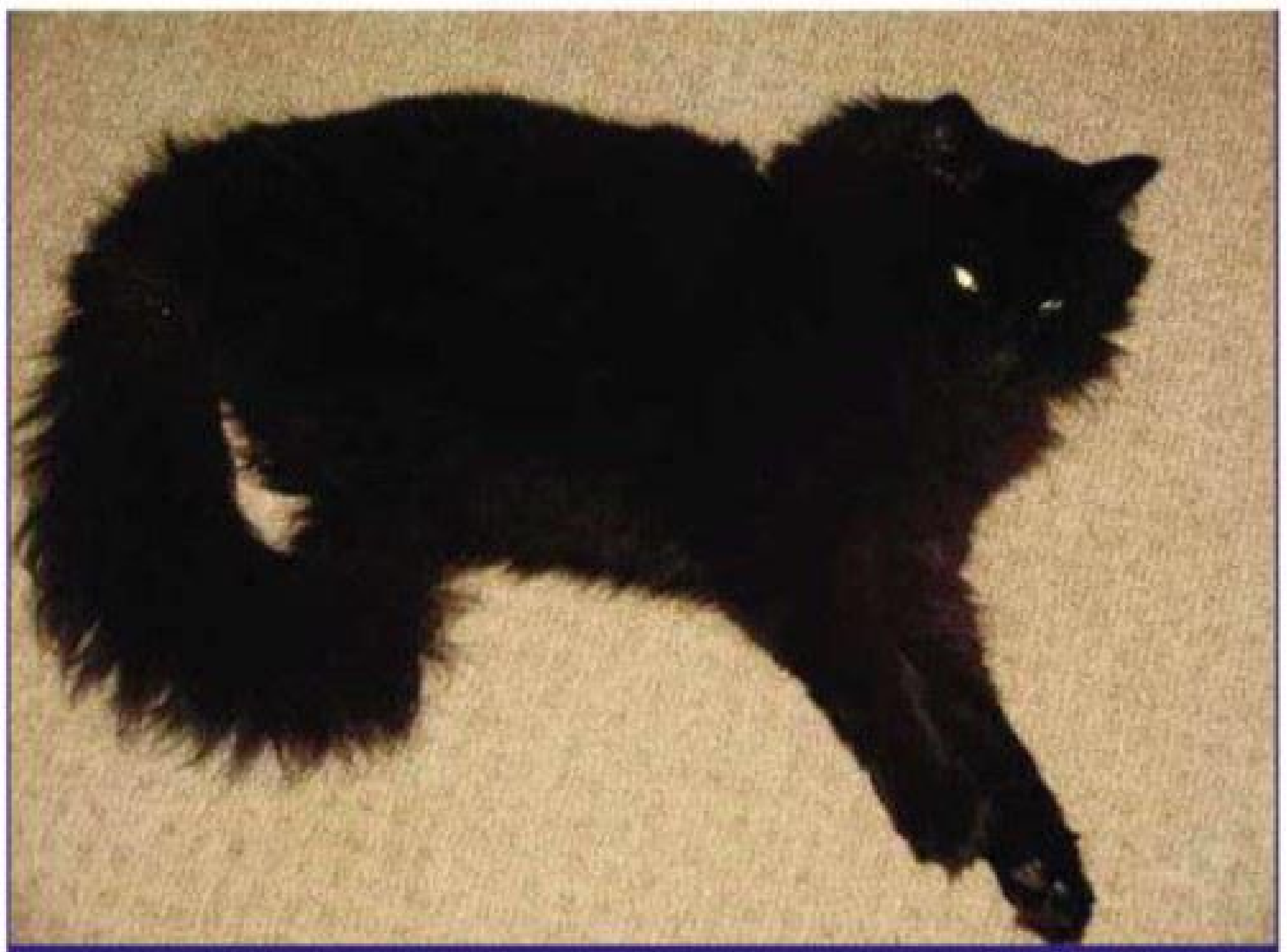
My sister Caroline Bedford has sent me this 2009 photo of her standing in the doorway of Cashel Castle in Ireland taken by her partner Helen Dawson. Helen used her camera-phone and didn't bother uploading it into their computer until recently. It was only when they were able to look at it properly on screen that they noticed the apparent dark figure beside Caroline in the open doorway. I'm sceptical about ghosts, but I'm at a loss to explain what this is. Any ideas?

**Mick Brown,** *By email*

## Excessive

A few years ago, a local paranormal research group wanted to carry out a ghost-watch at Brean Down Fort, south of Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, and at Farleigh Hungerford Castle, south of Bath. Both are in ruins. The National Trust wanted a fee of £900 for one night's investigation at Brean Down Fort, and English Heritage wanted £1,200 to investigate Farleigh Hungerford. Is this a rip-off?

**Paul R Thomas**
*Eason in Gordano, North Somerset*



## Bipedal cat

My cat was born with just two legs. Where his back legs should be, he has nothing, no stumps or partially developed legs. He was X-rayed once and has no pelvis. The vet suggested he was a Turkish Angora breed, but we don't know anything about his background other than he was rescued by a member of the public from some boys who were trying to drown him in a canal. He was taken to the Warrington Cats' Protection League, whence we adopted him six years ago. He is now about six-and-a-half years old and gets about the house with ease, even up and down stairs and onto the bed, although he doesn't go out other than in the garden. I am really interested to hear if anyone has ever heard of other cats born with a similar condition as I have only ever heard about cats with three legs.

**Sharon Sawyer** *By email*

## British group

Classical Corner 142 mentions 'the American group Nero & the Gladiators' [**FT280:21**]. In fact they were British and their members were all involved in the late 1950s and 1960s music scene.

**Brian Stevenson**
*By email*

## A question of timing

Robert Guffey [**FT277:54**] suggests that *The Morning of the Magicians* (which first appeared in an English translation in 1963) may have been read by comics artist Jack Kirby and may have influenced Kirby (and/or, presumably, Marvel Comics writer and publisher Stan Lee) in their creation of the *X-Men*. I don't know exactly in what month the 1963 English edition of the Pauwels and Bergier book appeared; Guffey merely says "earlier" than "September of 1963 when Lee and Kirby's *The X-Men* #1 hit the newstands". But Guffey is overlooking the dating practice in American comics and popular magazines: such are almost inevitably dated ahead, the date as printed on the cover being that on which they are expected to go *offsale*, not onsale.

*The X-Men* began as a bimonthly title and, while the date printed on #1 was indeed September 1963, this is not the date when it would have "hit the stands" but that at which the following issue would have been expected to hit the stands. Issue #1 would have been available about two months earlier, probably in late June or very early July. (This matches my own memory of buying the copy off a newsstand during my summer vacation between graduating high school and starting college; if I could dig out my diaries from that period I could probably narrow the actual date down to within a few days.)

So even if the English language edition of *The Morning of the Magicians* had appeared as early as January 1963, this would allow at most only six months (and probably less) for Jack Kirby to find and read it and to incorporate elements of it into a brand-new comic book franchise which had to be – from scratch – written, drawn, printed and distributed by the midpoint of the year. I don't know if it would have been logistically possible for a comic book publisher of 1963 to move that quickly, but it seems to be highly unlikely – and since Guffey eventually notes that he doesn't in fact have any idea if Kirby ever read the book, I think this one could be filed in the "presumptive coincidence" drawer.

**Dennis Lien**
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

## Shakespeare authorship

I always thought the belief that Shakespeare's plays were written by someone else ["Bard Wars" **FT280:32–37**] was motivated by sheer snobbery. Look how many of the candidates for "The Real Shakespeare" are upper class – Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Henry Neville, even Queen Elizabeth herself has been mooted. And yet Shakespeare himself was the son of a glove-maker, a working man, and was even (shudder!) an itinerant actor. How could a man with such low origins create some of the most beautiful speeches in the English language?

For myself, I believe he did, with perhaps some input from the company clowns when it came to the comedy.

But one area of research that is usually overlooked when researching the identity of Shakespeare is the written work itself. A writer can change their name, their location, their looks, their subject matter, everything about themselves, but they cannot change their style of writing.

Marlowe is a perfectly good candidate for "really being Shakespeare", taking into account dates and places and mysterious 'death', but he can't be Shakespeare for one simple reason: he and Shakespeare write in completely different styles. Everything about them, from their sense of plot to their use of words is different. Look at the two different ways in which they told the same story – Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Imagine *Faustus* told by Shakespeare or *Hamlet* told by Marlowe and you get very different plays.

I don't know Bacon and De Vere and Lanier's writing styles well enough to compare with Shakespeare – but perhaps this is something scholars should be looking for in regard to proof of authorship, rather than dates and disappearances and cryptographic tricks.

**Michelle Birkby**
*Hounslow, Middlesex*

While always maintaining a healthy scepticism about most things, every now and then I read something that strikes me as being the last word on a subject. I think it first happened when I read Larry Kusche's book *The Bermuda Triangle Mystery: Solved*. Then came Ronald Binns's book *The Loch Ness Monster Mystery – Solved*, which left me positively embarrassed that I had previously been inclined to believe in the creature. A further example was Jon Downes's article regarding the 'Mad Gasser of Mattoon' [**FT216:36–39**], which, in my view, comprehensively solved that 'mystery'.

Consequently, I was surprised on reading Jerry Glover's article 'Bard Wars' [**FT280:32–37**] that there was no mention of the chapter on the subject of the Shakespeare Authorship Question in Bill Bryson's book *Shakespeare*, which in my view is as much the last word on the subject as are the other texts mentioned above. As a one-time grammar school boy myself with "little Latin and less Greek", I have always felt irked by the inherent elitism in the anti-Stratfordian camp and almost cheered out loud when I finished Mr Bryson's book.

**Colin Field**
*London*

The feature on Shakespeare calls the locals of Stratford Stratfordians. However, they like to be known as Strathwegians. I was told this in no uncertain terms a good many years ago while chatting to a woman while delivering her washing machine. I accidentally called her a Stratfordian and had a 10-minute lecture about how wrong I was.

**Keith Warner**
*By email*

**Editor's note:** The term 'Stratfordians' is generally used – as it was in the article – not for natives of Stratford, but for those who believe that the works of Shakespeare could not possibly have been written by anyone other than Gulielmus Shakspere of Stratford.

## Cats' purr

Since there has yet to be a satisfactory answer to the age-old question of why cats purr, I would like to posit my own rather prosaic, wholly unqualified and yet oddly compelling theory. As a long-time cat owner, I now have the unshakeable belief that purring is one of the cat's many grooming techniques, that is to say, the frequency at which the cat purrs serves to vibrate the skin and loosen unwanted fur, which is why you end up with half a cat left on your clothes after a good long petting. Please forward my Nobel Prize – I thank you.

**Simon W Besson**
*Manchester*

## Lightning-scarred face

As an example of a face (as well as a rock) scarred by lightning (forming a dendritic pattern), I submit the following narrative. This is a tradition recorded circa 1865 from an Australian Aboriginal, Coomercudgkala by name, who presumably belonged to the George's River tribe, by a certain Mr Murdoch, near Taralga:

"Warmeela had been struck by lightning during a fierce storm that brought an end to a fierce drought thousands of years ago. Krubi, an old woman, led him back to the place where the lightning struck. There was a mark in the rock. The mark struck straight on over the flat rocks and the boulders to the erroded [*sic*] bank. It showed on the bare root of a gum tree, and the tree was split. It was the very tree that was printed on the face of Warmeela. Krubi sat by the gum, and there she spoke to the Great Spirit… in that moment a big light lit the sky. A red ball descended, lighting up the day in such a way as to startle all who saw it. Some screamed and rushed hither and thither. Not so Krubi and Warmeela. They knew what no one else knew. The good bunyip had answered Krubi's prayer." (CW Peck: *Australian Legends; Tales Handed Down from the Remotest Times by the Autocthonous Inhabitants of Our Land*, 1–2; Stafford & Co., Sydney, 1925: pp52–55.)

A subsequent edition (Lothian Publishing Co, Melbourne, 1933, pp177–181) revises this as follows: "The mark lay straight on over the flat rocks and the boulders, to the eroded bank. It showed on the bare root of a gumtree that it had split. Krubi looked up at the shape of the tree and she saw that it was the one printed on her husband's face."

**Marinus Anthony Van der Sluijs**
*London*

## Attention-grabbing

The zero out of 10 for investigative journalist Leslie Kean's book *UFOs: Generals, Pilots and Government Officials go on the Record* [**FT280:62**] was clearly an attention-grabbing piece of nonsense, but the 'review' itself should not go unchallenged. Kean's foreword was written by President Clinton's Chief of Staff, John Podesta. Endorsements included ones from physicist Michio Kaku and former CNN space/science correspondent Miles O'Brien. Such people do not associate their names with UFOs lightly.

The content was refreshingly sober: no abductions; no crop circles; no channelled material; no anonymous whistle-blowers – the book was based around the testimony of people with verifiable backgrounds in government, the military or the aviation community, who had either seen a UFO, or been involved in official investigations. Kean's conclusions were eminently rational: most UFO sightings are misidentifications or hoaxes, but a small proportion appear to defy conventional explanation; we don't know what they are; the phenomenon has some air safety implications and is worthy of proper study by the authorities and by the scientific community.

Eight or nine out of 10 would more accurately reflect the contents and style of this data-rich exploration of some of the world's most interesting UFO sightings, and of the wider issues the phenomenon raises.

**Nick Pope**
*London*

**Peter Brookesmith responds:** Having no need to draw attention to myself, I awarded Ms Kean's book a score that reflected precisely my opinion of it. So, a smattering of the good and great endorsed it (I dealt with Dr Kaku's ill-advised encomium in the review) and contributed to it. So what? People see, or hear about, things they can't explain. Their social status doesn't magically confer unimpeachable reliability on their reports, still less on their judgement. Allen Hynek's shrewd first question on encountering a report of an unidentified flying object – "Unidentified to whom?" – applies forcefully here. Ms Kean makes no effort whatever even to describe, let alone to evaluate, any of the mundane identifications of the sightings of which she treats. Nor does she attempt any critical analysis of her own. This is not what is usually meant by investigative journalism. Hardly a "data-rich exploration of some of the world's most interesting UFO sightings", then: all Ms Kean's data are questionable, and she simply does not admit of exploration.

## The stupid club

Christian Saunders's Forum piece on the 27 Club [**FT280:57–59**] managed to fall into the trap that has claimed many journalists before him when discussing the death of Kurt Cobain.

While it is true that following Cobain's death, his mother, Wendy O'Connor, did say, "Now he's gone and joined that stupid club", this does not necessarily "attest to the fact that mother and son must have had previous conversations about the 27 Club". In fact as journalist Helen Brown recently pointed out in the *Daily Telegraph*, the "stupid club" O'Connor was referring to was more likely a family one – she was instead alluding to the number of suicides that litter Kurt's family tree.[1]

Sadly, Kurt was not the first Cobain to take his own life, and the website bipolar-lives.com details the genetic predisposition to suicide within the Cobain family.[2]

When Kurt was 12, his great uncle Burie, brother of Kurt's grandfather, Leland Cobain, shot himself in the stomach and head. Within a year, another great uncle, Kenneth, also committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. His mother Wendy's side of the family was similarly affected by tragedy. Wendy's grandfather stabbed himself in front of this family and was committed to a mental hospital, but he completed his suicide two months later by ripping open his stab wounds.

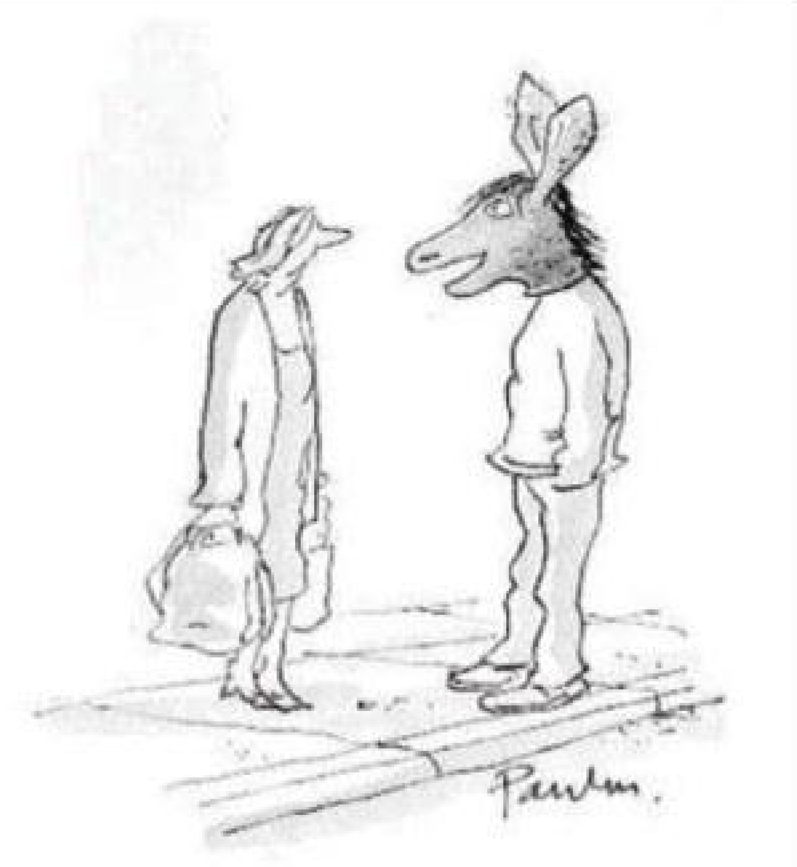
With such a tortured family history, it's no wonder Kurt reportedly joked about his "suicide genes" with his school friends.

**Martyn P Jackson**
*Cramlington, Northumberland*

**NOTES**

[1] http://tgr.ph/oiCXV4 (telegraph.co.uk).

[2] http://bit.ly/4DKeEz (bipolar-lives.com).



"Gosh, I haven't seen you since you worked your magic on me behind the school bike sheds!"

PAUL TAYLOR

# it happened to me...

Have you had strange experiences that you cannot explain?
We are always interested in reading of odd events and occurrences.
CONTACT US BY POST: **FORTEAN TIMES, BOX 2409, LONDON, NW5 4NP**
OR E-MAIL TO **sieveking@forteantimes.com**
Or post your message on the **www.forteantimes.com** message board.

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

## Monkey in a fez

Many years ago, after helping to restore 18th-century plasterwork at the Menagerie in Northampton, the (now late) owner asked me to design a grotto in the old cellar. Since the building had been a folly to the now lost Horton Hall and had featured a real menagerie, it was suggested that "Orpheus charming the animals" would be a suitable theme, so I sketched a rock and shell-work cave surrounding a pond with a lion, a leopard, a deer and a sea monster all sculpted in shells with Orpheus playing his harp at the centre of the pool.

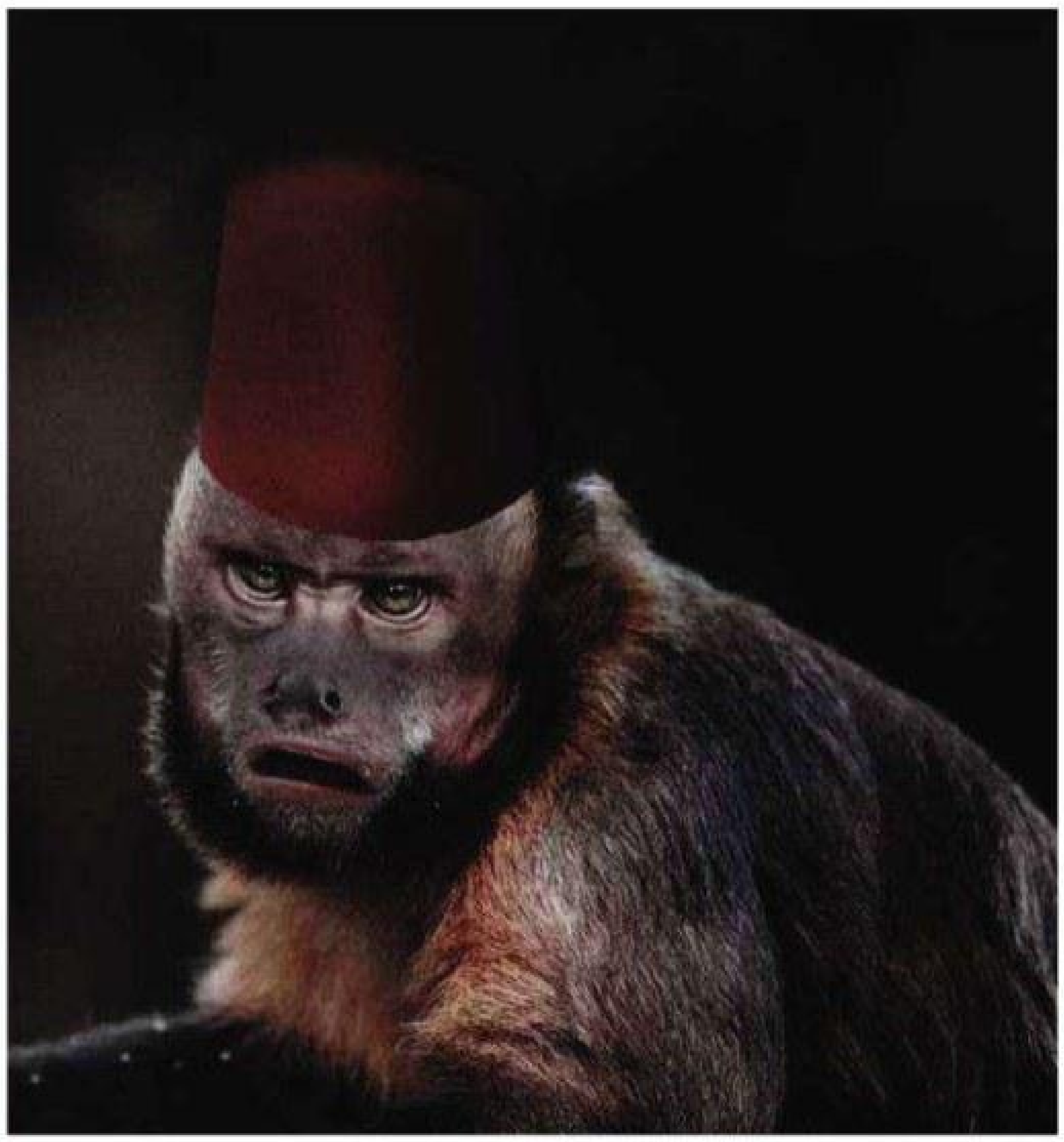
One night shortly after I had completed the drawings and was still at the menagerie, I was woken by a sound in the corner of the bedroom, a sort of scratching. It was summer and I had not closed the curtains, so there was dim light. I supposed a rat – there were fields all round us – and reluctantly poked my head above the sheets. In the corner by the window I could clearly see a small monkey squatting on a laundry basket. It was wearing a red Turkish-style fez.

I gazed at it for a few seconds before it jumped up and rushed at me. I ducked under the sheet, and I could feel its sharp little hands tugging at the bedclothes. After probably only a few seconds, it stopped and I emerged cautiously. No monkey. Windows and door shut, no chimney. I turned on the light. Nothing.

Next day, I took the hint: hallucination or revenant from the long defunct menagerie, I felt something was nudging me. I drew a little monkey into my design (sans fez) and it sits now on a rock amongst the other animals, listening to Orpheus.

**Christopher J Hobbs**
*By email*

**P.S.** The Menagerie is currently up for sale.



GETTY IMAGES / MICHAEL REGAN // FEZ: ETIENNE GILFILLAN

## FT is dangerous for reader health

Let me explain that letter title. I have been a reader of *Fortean Times* for many years now, and therefore I have absorbed much strange lore, both consciously and unconsciously. Like all such knowledge, it can be a dangerous thing if not applied in the correct manner – that is, with a large pinch of salt.

Last week, I woke up to discover that I was lying in a dried-up pool of blood. A quick check assured me that I wasn't suddenly deficient of a limb, nor was I in the company of a horse's head (sans body or otherwise). I quickly filed this as a nosebleed, an annoying event to be sure, but obviously either a one-off fluke or something to talk to my doctor about if it recurred. A few days later, I had another nosebleed during my morning shower, and made a mental note to see my doctor.

Then came the event that caused me to write in. I had another nosebleed after getting up. It was minor and stopped almost as soon as it started, and I went to work by train as usual. During the journey, the guard made an announcement that happened to include the time. I glanced at my watch and noticed that although it was running, it was exactly 30 minutes slow. At this point, that dormant ancient lore from *FT* came rushing to the surface of my mind, "Nose Bleeds" plus "Watches Stopping", plus "Unexplained Loss Of Time" equals... well, only one thing: *Alien Abduction*.

I was genuinely disturbed at this thought, but eventually shook it off, and the events of the day washed away the concerns. But for just a minute or so, I could easily have been convinced that something dreadful had happened to me. A little knowledge applied to a coincidence can be a dangerous thing. I reset the Japanese movement watch, and it's still running on perfect time a week later. I will get my nose cauterised as soon as possible; you will be the first to know if they find a small metal slither of unknown origin in my nostril.

**Andy Kelly**
*Fylde Coast*

## Big and yellow

I am a 54-year-old man. When I was around 11 years old, I was living in a remote part of North Wales and one summer day I was playing with a friend in a field about 50ft (15m) from a small copse. Between 600 and 800 yards (550–730m) away, there were thick woods belonging to the Forestry Commission. We both spotted something moving through the trees about 600 yards away. It was very big and yellow but seemed without any proper shape, probably best described as oval. As soon as we spotted it, we both ran for the small copse behind us, which we had to go through to reach open fields beyond and our homes.

I remember seeing the object and being afraid, after which I have no memory until I came to my senses face down under thick undergrowth in the small copse. I could hear what I can only describe as something breathing through some sort of apparatus like a valve. As I lay there, whatever or whoever it was moved away and the breathing got fainter. Once I could no longer hear it, I jumped up and ran home, but for some reason neither my friend nor I ever spoke to each other about it.

Can anyone suggest why I can't remember anything – and is there any way I can retrieve the memory? I think about this nearly every day.

**Paddy Berry**
*By email*

## Bright red creature

A strange thing happened to me earlier this year. I was driving along the M4 motorway, returning to Wales from Bristol with a female colleague. Although traffic was fairly light for mid-afternoon, I could see vehicles ahead swerving to avoid something in the middle lane.

As I approached, I wasn't at all certain what I was looking at. It was bright red like a child's toy, yet it moved like an animal resembling a large piglet with a round rump and a small, swishing, curly tail. It appeared to be smooth and glistening, but my impression was that its colouring was natural rather than attributable to injury.

"What the hell is that in the road?" I said to my colleague. She was reading and glanced at it, but refused to take a proper look, fearing that it had been run over. I looked back at it in the mirror. It was alive, but whether it was injured or ambling naturally, it was making for the undergrowth beyond the hard shoulder. There was no blood trail as far as I could see.

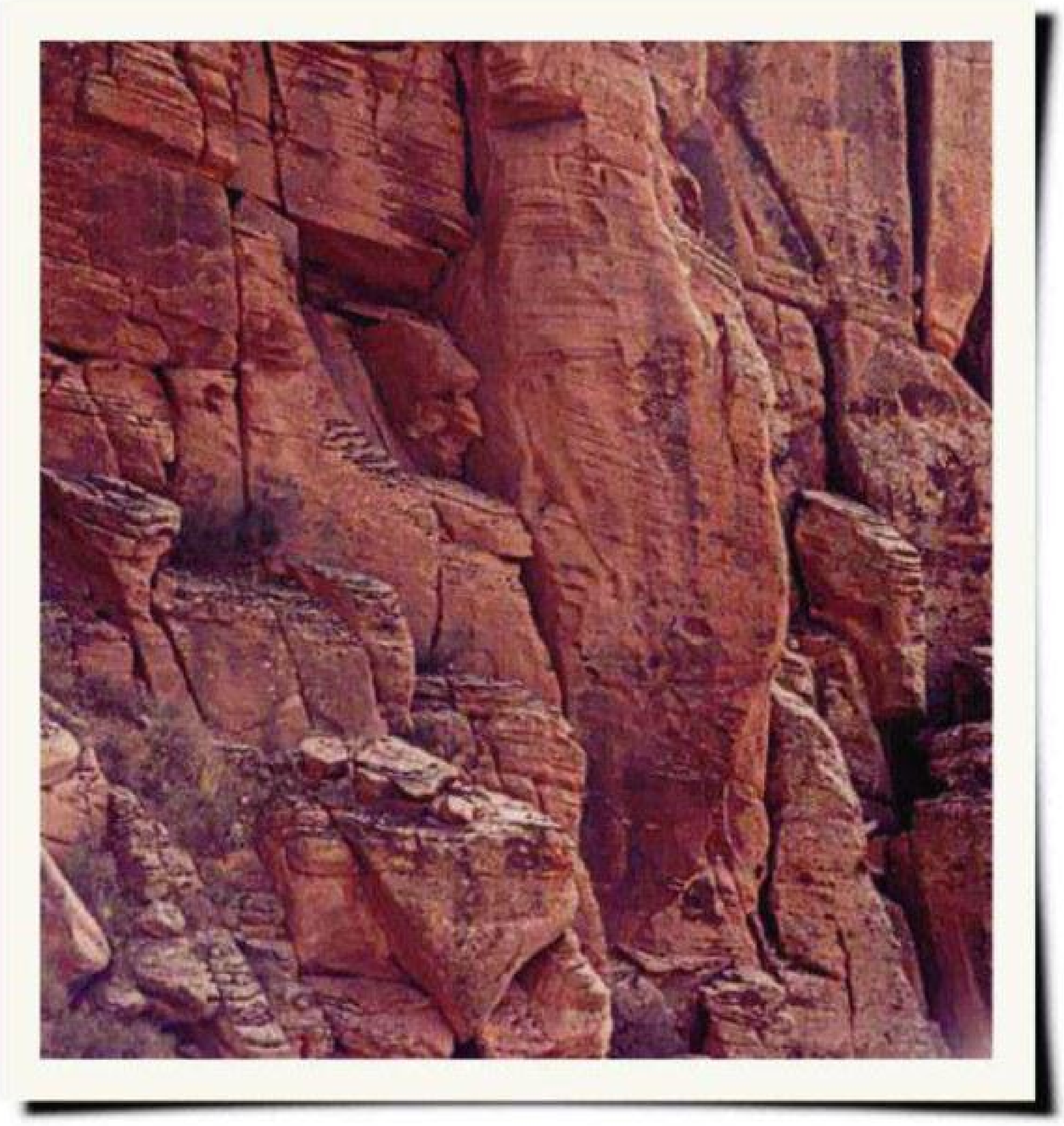
For a second, I had a strong urge to stop and go back for a proper look, but instead I carried on and the opportunity passed. Whenever I think of it, I just cannot make sense of it at all.

**Colin Ings**
*Cardiff, Wales*

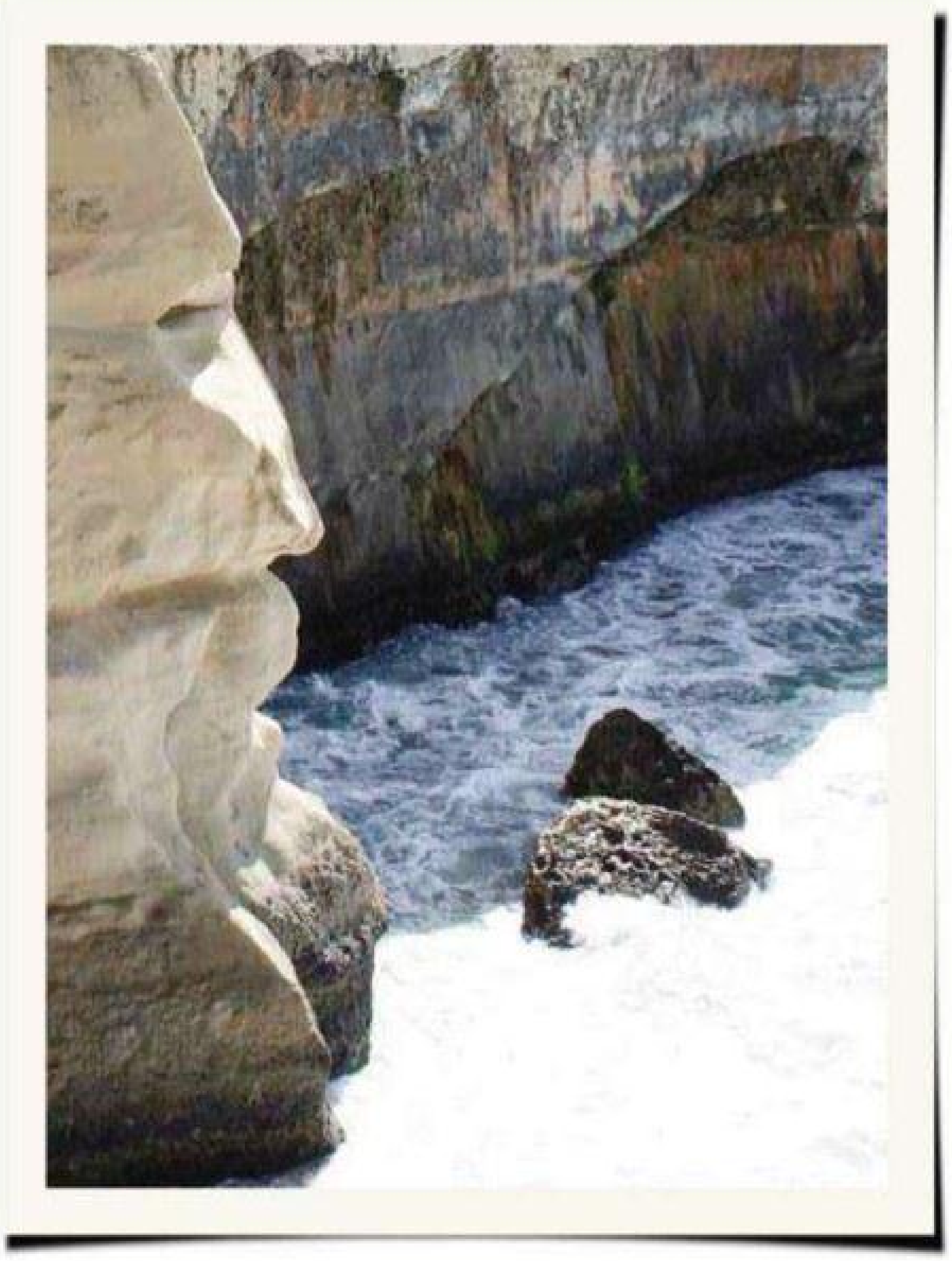
# simulacra corner

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London, NW5 4NP, United Kingdom, or to sieveking@forteantimes.com. If your photo is published, we'll send you an exclusive *Fortean Times* gift.

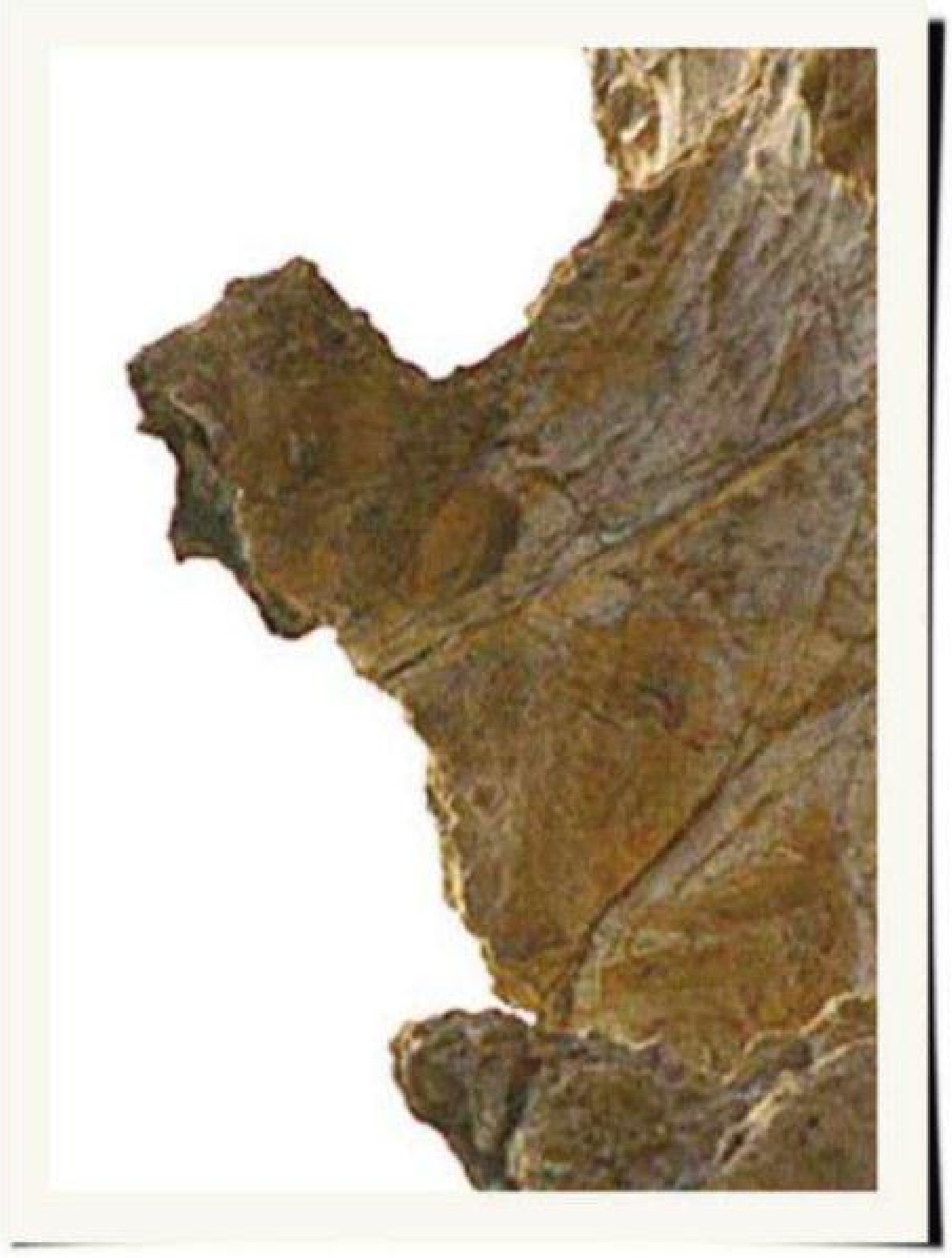
## A selection of humanoid faces in rock sent in by FT's observant readers.



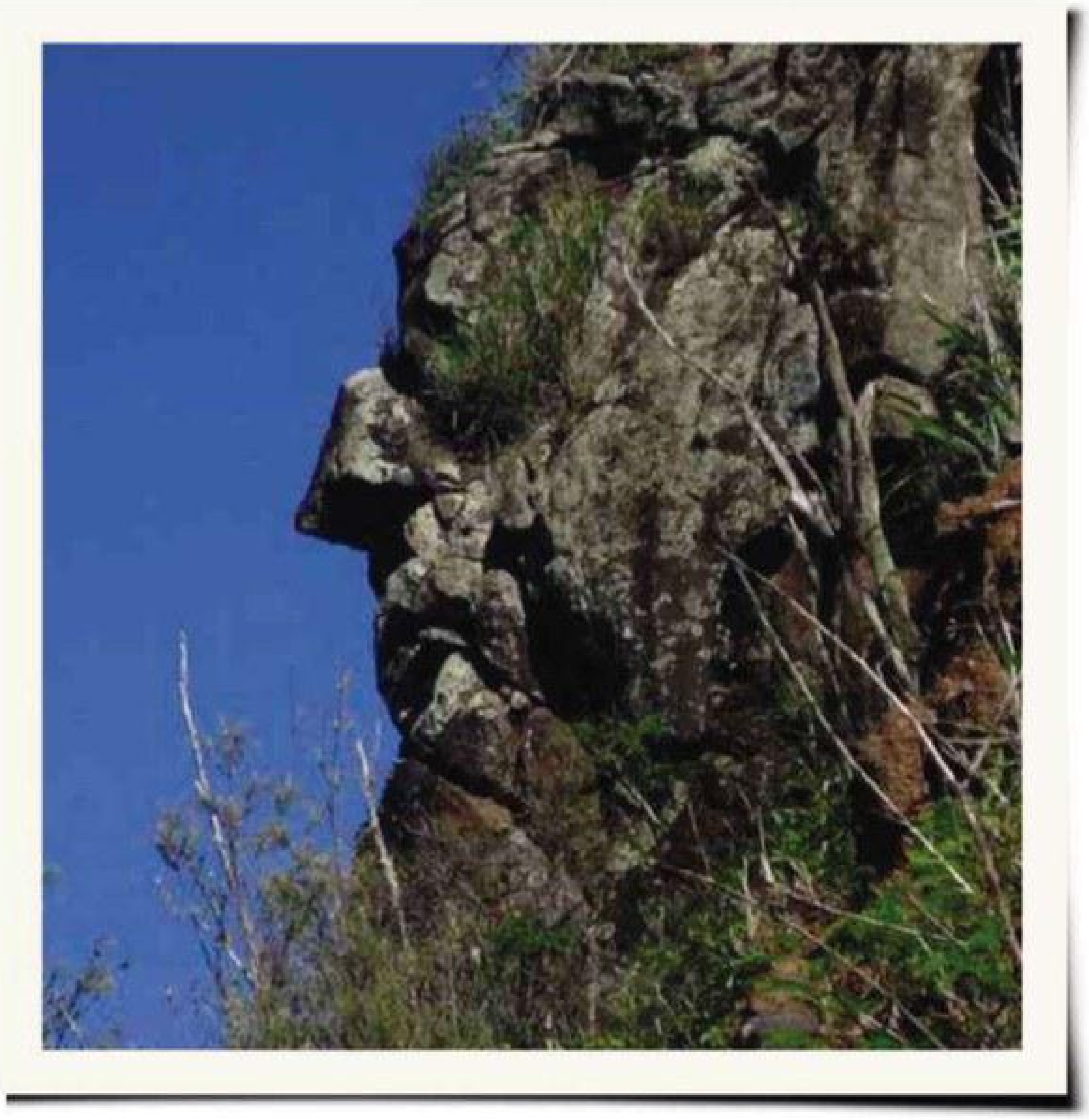
Leeanne Bargen and Rob Berry, visiting Arizona from Canada, noticed this face peering out of the side of the Grand Canyon, 50ft (15m) above the trail.



A rock profile photographed by Andrew Clark at Tunnel Beach, Dunedin, New Zealand.



Jeffery Vallance noticed this stone head jutting out of the rocks close to the ruins of the historic Sutro Baths near San Francisco, California. He thought it resembled an Easter Island moai head.



A romanesque profile on a clliffside by the road to Waihe'e Falls on East Maui, Hawaii, photographed by Phil Proctor.

# reader info

## how to subscribe

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £39.98; EC £47.50; USA $79.99 ($143.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £55.
Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

### North America (US & Canada)

Subscribers should contact: IMS. 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 888-428 6676. or 800-428 3003; Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

### UK, Europe & rest of world

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times** Dovetail Services, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU, UK. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.
Telephone payments and queries: 0844 844 0049.
Fax payments and queries: 0844 815 0866.
E-mail payments and queries: ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

## how to submit

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by *FT* readers and contributors in any medium or format.

### Illustrations

Contact the art director before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

### Article & forum submissions

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK or email david_sutton@dennis.co.uk. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate. A contributors' guide is available. For the latest version of this please contact us on one of the numbers on the editorial page or consult our website at www.forteantimes.com.

### Letters

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteantimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

### Books & periodicals for review

Send to: Reviews Editor, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK. Send DVDs and games to the Editor, as above.

### Caveat

*FT* aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. *FT* can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

*We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.*

## Clippers wanted!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 8 Nov 2011. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

**Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK**
**E-mail: sieveking@forteantimes.com**
**or post on the FT website at www.forteantimes.co.uk, where there is a contributor's guide.**

## Why Fortean?

**Fortean Times** is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

**FT** toes no party line.

## Special Correspondents

**AUSTRALIA** Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC). **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Neil L Inglis, Michael Newton, Steve Scanlon. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Bobby Zodiac. **FINLAND** Heather Fowler. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin, Cliff Wren. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson, Leslie John Thomson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Chris Williams. **TURKEY** Izzet Goksu. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Ron Rosenblatt (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

## Fort Sorters (who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

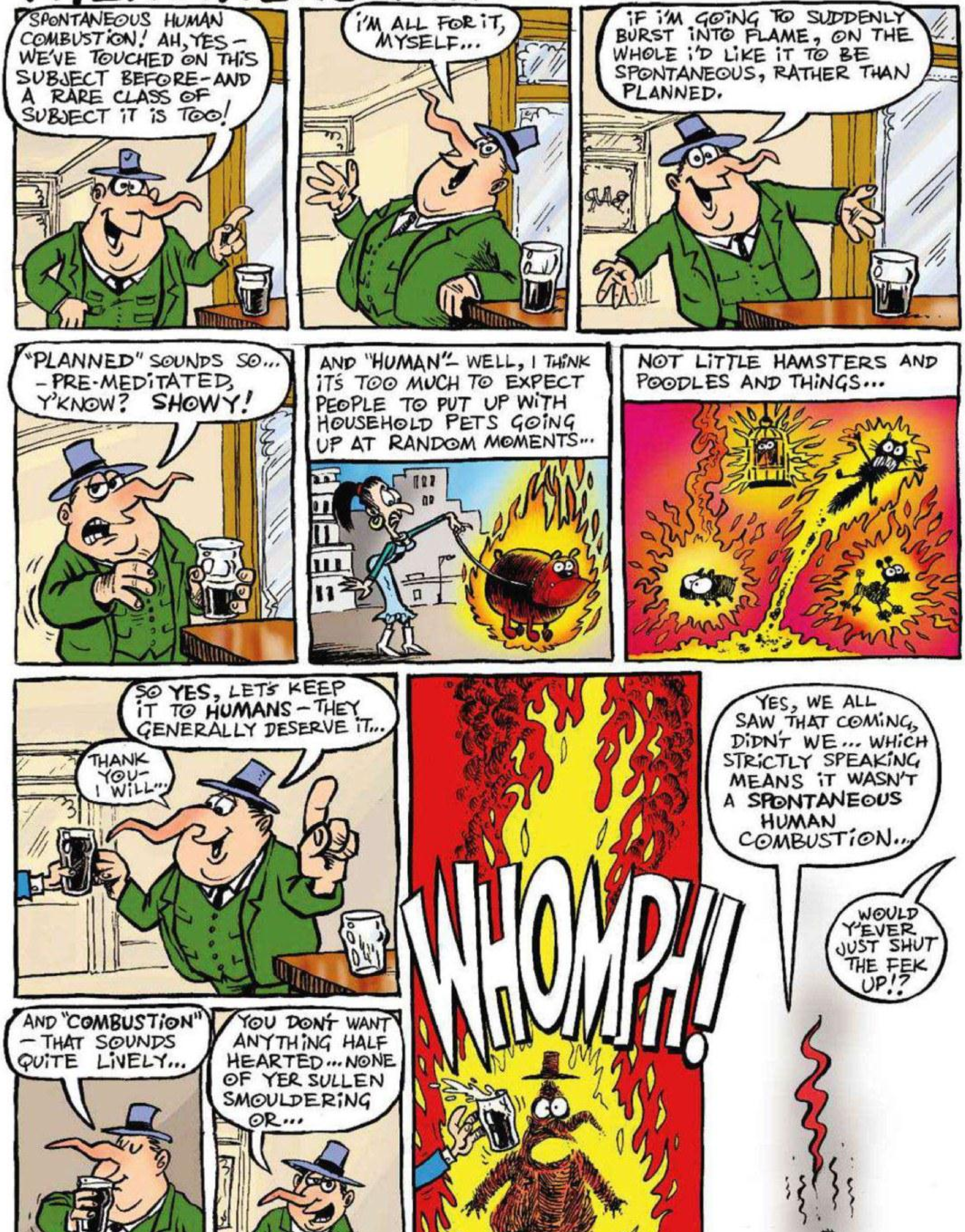
Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Steve Moore, Liz Parratt, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

## Clipping Credits for FT282

Richard Alexander, Gail-Nina Anderson, G Apps, Helen Bate, Louise Bath, James Beckett, John Billingsley, Claire Blamey, Cecilia Boggis, Rachel Carthy, Tim Chapman, Peter Christie, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Graham Cordon, Mat Coward, Mike Dash, Kate Eccles, John H Evans, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, David Gamon, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Donald Gilchrist, Nigel Herwin, Kevin Hubbard, Colin Ings, Martyn P Jackson, Tony James, Bill & Louise Kelly, Peter Lorimer, Richard Lowke, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Steve Moore, Andy Munro, John Palazzi, Jim Price, Keith Ruffles, Paul Screeton, Claire Seahorse, Christopher Simmons, Tony Smith, Colin Smythe, Roy Stilling, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Rob Thomson, Pam Thornton, Andrew Upton, Nicholas Warren, Len Watson, Paul Whyte, Bobby Zodiac.

# PHENOMENOMIX

HUNT EMERSON


SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION! AH, YES - WE'VE TOUCHED ON THIS SUBJECT BEFORE - AND A RARE CLASS OF SUBJECT IT IS TOO!
I'M ALL FOR IT, MYSELF...
IF I'M GOING TO SUDDENLY BURST INTO FLAME, ON THE WHOLE I'D LIKE IT TO BE SPONTANEOUS, RATHER THAN PLANNED.
BAR
"PLANNED" SOUNDS SO... - PRE-MEDITATED, Y'KNOW? SHOWY!
AND "HUMAN" - WELL, I THINK IT'S TOO MUCH TO EXPECT PEOPLE TO PUT UP WITH HOUSEHOLD PETS GOING UP AT RANDOM MOMENTS...
NOT LITTLE HAMSTERS AND POODLES AND THINGS...
SO YES, LET'S KEEP IT TO HUMANS - THEY GENERALLY DESERVE IT...
THANK YOU - I WILL...
AND "COMBUSTION" - THAT SOUNDS QUITE LIVELY...
YOU DON'T WANT ANYTHING HALF HEARTED... NONE OF YER SULLEN SMOULDERING OR...
WHOMPH!
YES, WE ALL SAW THAT COMING, DIDN'T WE... WHICH STRICTLY SPEAKING MEANS IT WASN'T A SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION...
WOULD Y'EVER JUST SHUT THE FEK UP!?

# COMING NEXT MONTH

## REEL FORTEANA

**HAS REAL PARANORMAL ACTIVITY BEEN CAPTURED IN THE MOVIES?**

## THE FRINGE ZOOLOGIST

**WEREWOLVES, VAMPIRES AND A VERY CURIOUS COLLECTION**

+

**A UFO IN 1561, REPTILIAN BEINGS, MEXICAN MIRACLES AND MUCH MORE...**

## FORTEAN TIMES 283

**ON SALE 8 DECEMBER**

HUGO PIETTE

# TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

## DECEMBER 1981

The month began with a news conference held by Herman Regusters (a Pasadena space scientist) and his wife, who had just returned from Africa to tell of the brontosaurus-like creature they had seen on a Congolese lake. However, they had no photos, track casts or other tangible evidence and were savaged by a disappointed press. They returned to Lake Tele in search of living dinosaurs three years later, again returning with little convincing proof. However, their unwavering conviction inspired a number of later British and American expeditions. **FT42:27**

Two days after Christmas, four young London boys returned home frightened, after playing on Hackney Marshes. They had encountered "a giant great growling hairy thing", they said. When it stood up on its hind legs they "ran like hell". Earlier, they had found and followed several tracks of large footprints in the snow, which one of them identified as 'bear'. They even met a couple walking a dog, who warned them that the creature was up ahead. Their parents told police, who organised a 50-man and helicopter search the next day. They found tracks (which a zoo official confirmed were a bear's) on both sides of the River Lea and a clawed tree – but no bear. Police also failed to track down the other witnesses, including a hoaxer who claimed to have caused it all in a hired bear-suit. No one seems to have doubted the boys were frightened by 'something', but one later said their apparition had un-bearlike "thin legs". Further inconsistencies mounted and when rain eliminated the snow tracks, the search was called off. No bear was reported missing from anywhere, and none was subsequently sighted anywhere. *FT*'s files revealed an odd twist. Three weeks earlier, the carcases of two bears, decapitated and skinned, were found in the River Lea, which winds through the whole area... now better known as London's Olympic Park. **FT37:45–46**

## DECEMBER 1991

Back in June, we noted the rise of a new martial cult in Mozambique, helping the Frelimo government resist South African-backed Renamo rebels. The Naprama (aka: Barama, or N'prama) were little more than poorly-armed ragged gangs inspired by a young prophet, Manuel Antonio, whom they believed had risen from the dead. More importantly, their successes against better-armed Renamo troops was due, they believed, to a magical 'vaccination' (the n'prama) ceremony in which Antonio made them invulnerable to bullets. A full account of this cult is given by Carolyn Nordstrom in her book *A Different Kind Of War Story* (1997), in which she reports that Antonio himself was killed on the 6th of this month. **FT59:22**

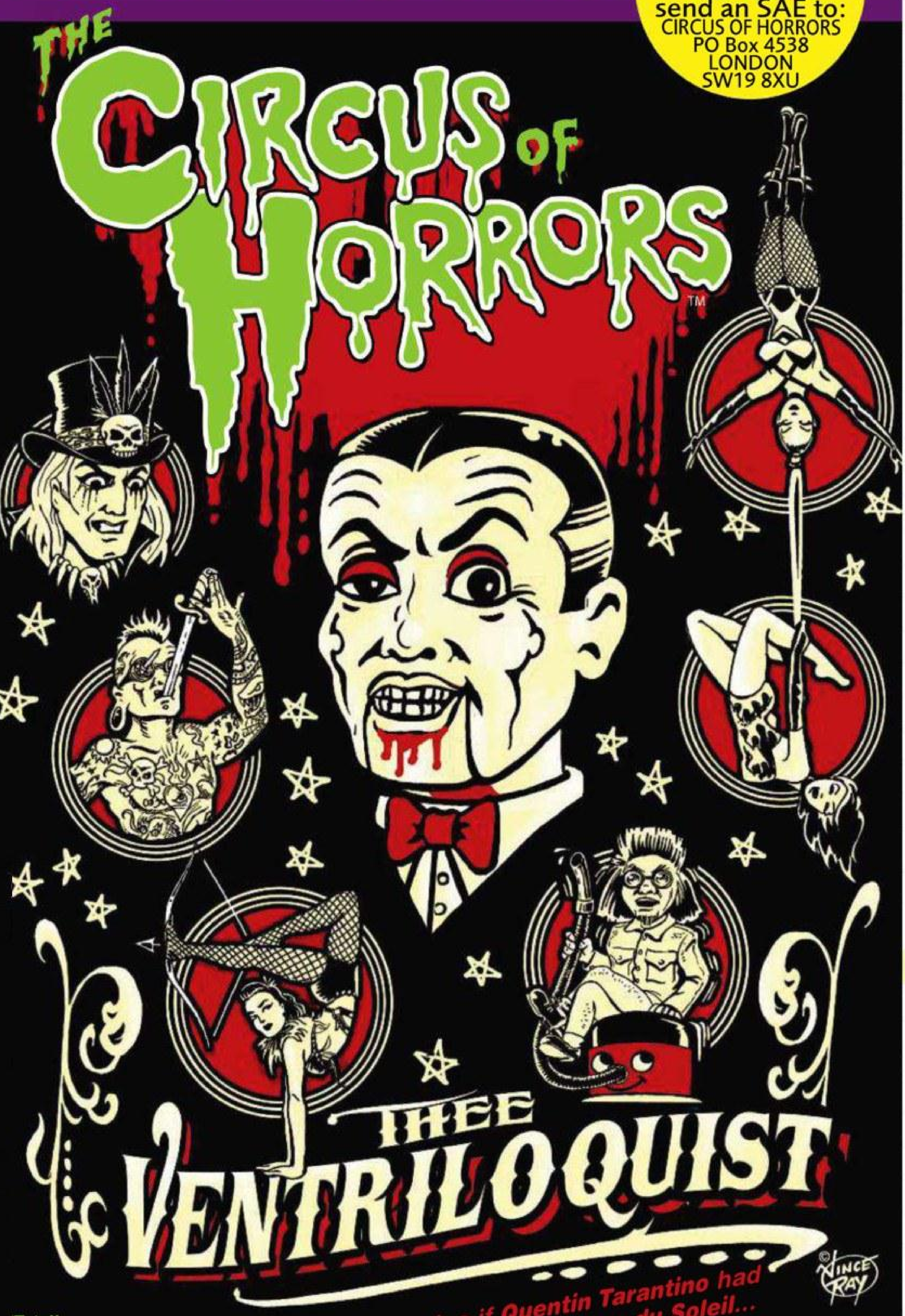
Three days before Christmas, an announcer on a student-run TV station in Bulgaria reported that there had been a serious accident at the Kozloduy nuclear plant on the Danube, and people should stay inside and wait for a presidential announcement. It's fair to say this caused considerable alarm as the news spread among the public. The outdated plant has a history of breakdowns and radiation leaks and, worse, is built in a seismic zone that saw an earthquake hit Romania, just across the Danube, the previous August. Local folklore, echoing similar anxieties about Chernobyl, tells of oddly mutated wildlife and livestock. Kozloduy has escaped closure (the Germans had already closed a safer plant) because it generated nearly half of the country's power; but as we write, the 2011 Japanese quake-tsunami-nuclear disaster is fresh in memory and shows how this scare could have gone badly for Bulgaria. Within an hour of the prank broadcast, station officials had to admit it had been a "Christmas joke". A mob formed outside the TV station and only a police guard prevented students being attacked. An engineer at Kozloduy did not mince his words: "The idiot behind this should be killed, and that's not good enough." **FT62:8**

## DECEMBER 2001

The world's largest artwork by a single person must be Peter Anderson's head-and-shoulders portrait of a smiling Australian stockman. His 'Eldee man' covers 4.3 million square metres (46.3 million sq ft) of the Mundi Mundi Plains at Eldee Farm, north of Broken Hill in New South Wales. Using a tractor and working from a sketch without satellite aids, it took him a year to plough furrows into the arid plain, which were then seeded to form living lines of bushes. The smile alone is as wide as the Empire State Building is tall and its large teeth the size of football pitches. 'Ando' declared that he was inspired by the famous images of birds and spiders marked out on Peru's Nazca desert. **FT156:15**

The show that rocked Britain's Got Talent!

2-FOR-1 OFFER FOR FORTEAN TIMES READERS
send an SAE to:
CIRCUS OF HORRORS
PO Box 4538
LONDON
SW19 8XU


THE CIRCUS OF HORRORS™
THEE VENTRILOQUIST
© VINCE RAY
Imagine if Quentin Tarantino had directed Cirque du Soleil... then you would only be half way there!

"Totally UNVELIEVABLE!"
Scott Mills, Radio 1

"GRUESOMELY GOOD! like Rocky Horror ON ACID!"

"I loved it and I'm sure the ROYAL FAMILY would love it!"

"FANTASTIC! that's what I call ENTERTAINMENT!"
David Hasselhoff

circusofhorrors.co.uk

Follow us on Twitter Facebook and YouTube

WARNING: The Circus of Horrors contains some nudity and language of an adult nature, it is not suitable for children, sissies or chavs. This show contains nuts!

BIZARRE ROCK HAMMER SkinDeep Le Maitre

## 2011 DATES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **BLACKPOOL** The Globe, Pleasure Beach | THRS 27 to SAT 29 OCT | 0871 222 9090<br>Ticketmaster 08444993666 | www.blackpoolpleasurebeach.com |
| **BRADFORD** St Georges Hall | SUN 30 OCT | 01274 432 000 | www.bradford-theatres.co.uk/st-georges-hall |
| **LEICESTER** De Montfort Hall | MON 31 OCT | 0116 233 3111 | www.demontforthall.co.uk |
| **CROYDON** Fairfield Halls | TUE 1 NOV | 020 8688 9291 | www.fairfield.co.uk |
| **GUILDFORD** G Live | THRS 3 NOV | 0844 7701 797 | www.glive.co.uk |
| **SOUTHAMPTON** Guildhall | FRI 4 NOV | 023 8063 2601 | www.livenation.co.uk/southampton |
| **WESTON SUPER NIGHTMARE** Playhouse | SAT 5 NOV | 01934 645 544 | www.theplayhouse.co.uk |
| **TEWKESBURY** Roses Theatre | SUN 6 NOV | 01684 295 074 | www.rosestheatre.org |
| **ST HELENS** Theatre Royal | MON 7 NOV | 01744 756 000 | www.sthelenstheatreroyal.com |
| **WARRINGTON** Parr Hall | TUE 8 NOV | 01925 442 345 | www.pyramidparrhall.co.uk |
| **SHREWSBURY** Theatre Severn | THRS 10 NOV | 01743 281 281 | www.theatresevern.co.uk |
| **NEWTOWN** Theatr Hafren | FRI 11 NOV | 01686 625 007 | www.theatrhafren.co.uk |
| **MALVERN** Theatre | SAT 12 NOV | 01684 892 277 | www.malvern-theatres.co.uk |
| **CHATHAM** Central Theatre | SUN 13 NOV | 01634 338 338 | http://tickets.medway.gov.uk |
| **WEYMOUTH** Pavilion | MON 14 NOV | 01305 783 225 | https://weymouthpavilion.purchase-tickets-online.co.uk |
| **YEOVIL** Octagon | TUE 15 NOV | 01935 422 884 | www.octagon-theatre.co.uk |
| **EASTBOURNE** Congress Theatre | WED 16 NOV | 01323 412 000 | www.eastbournetheatres.co.uk |
| **NEWPORT** Riverfront | FRI 18 / SAT 19 NOV | 01633 656 757 | www.newport.gov.uk/theriverfront |
| **LINCOLN** Theatre Royal | SUN 20 NOV | 01522 519 999 | www.lincolntheatreroyal.com |
| **BUXTON** Opera House | MON 21 NOV | 0845 127 2190 | www.buxtonoperahouse.org.uk |
| **YORK** Barbican Centre | TUE 22 NOV | 0844 854 2757 | www.yorkbarbican.co.uk |
| **SCUNTHORPE** The Baths | WED 23 NOV | 0844 854 2776 | www.scunthorpetheatres.co.uk |
| **MANSFIELD** Palace Theatre | THRS 24 NOV | 01623 633 133 | www.mansfield.gov.uk/palacetheatre |
| **HULL** New Theatre | FRI 25 NOV | 01482 300 300 | www.hullcc.gov.uk/hullnewtheatre |
| **BILLINGHAM** Forum | SAT 26 / 27 NOV | 01642 552 663 | www.forumtheatrebillingham.co.uk |
| **AYR** Town Hall | TUE 29 NOV | 01292 269 793 | www.ticketweb.co.uk |
| **PERTH** Concert Hall | WED 30 NOV | 01738 621 031 | www.horsecross.co.uk |
| **HUDDERSFIELD** Town Hall | THRS 1 DEC | 01484 223 200 | www.kirklees.gov.uk/townhalls/huddersfield.shtml |
| **NEWCASTLE** Journal Tyne Theatre | FRI 2 DEC | 0844 493 9999 | www.thejournaltynetheatre.co.uk |
| **CONSETT** Empire Theatre | SAT 3 DEC | 01207 218 171 | www.leisureworksonline.co.uk/empireevents.cfm |

## 2012 DATES

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SOUTHEND** Cliffs Pavilion | MON 9 JAN | 01702 351 135 | www.thecliffspavilion.co.uk |
| **COLCHESTER** Mercury Theatre | TUE 10 / 11 JAN | 01206 573 948 | www.mercurytheatre.co.uk |
| **BASINGTOKE** The Anvil | THRS 12 JAN | 01256 844 244 | www.anvilarts.org.uk |
| **TRURO** Hall for Cornwall | FRI 13 & 14 JAN | 01872 262 466 | www.hallforcornwall.co.uk |
| **SALISBURY** City Hall | SUN 15 JAN | 01722 434 434 | www.cityhallsalisbury.co.uk |
| **AYLESBURY** Waterside Theatre | TUE 17 JAN | 0844 871 7615 | www.ambassadortickets.com/Aylesbury |
| **HEREFORD** Courtyard Theatre | WED 18 JAN | 01432 340 555 | www.courtyard.org.uk |
| **SWANSEA** Grand Theatre | THRS 19 JAN | 01792 475 715 | www.swanseagrand.co.uk |
| **WOLVERHAMPTON** Civic Theatre | FRI 20 JAN | 0870 320 7000 | www.wolvescivic.co.uk |
| **DUNSTABLE** Grove Theatre | SAT 21 JAN | 01582 602 080 | www.grovetheatre.co.uk |
| **BROMLEY** Churchill Theatre | SUN 22 JAN | 0844 871 7620 | www.ambassadortickets.com/Bromley |
| **HAYES** Beck Theatre | MON 23 JAN | 020 8561 8371 | www.becktheatre.org.uk |
| **WORTHING** Pavilion Theatre | TUE 24 JAN | 01903 206 206 | www.worthingtheatres.co.uk |
| **READING** Hexagon | WED 25 JAN | 0118 960 6060 | www.readingarts.com |
| **STOKE** Victoria Hall | THRS 26 JAN | 0844 871 7615 | www.ambassadortickets.com/Victoria-Hall |
| **LICHFIELD** Garrick Theatre | FRI 27 JAN | 01543 412 121 | www.lichfieldgarrick.com |
| **LLANDUDNO** Venue Cymru | SAT 28 JAN | 01492 872 000 | www.venuecymru.co.uk |
| **WATFORD** Colosseum | SUN 29 JAN | 0845 075 3993 | www.watfordcolosseum.co.uk |
| **STEVENAGE** Gordon Craig Theatre | MON 30 JAN | 01438 363 200 | www.gordon-craig.co.uk |
| **NEW BRIGHTON** Floral Pavilion Theatre | TUE 31 JAN | 0151 666 0000 | www.floralpavilion.com |

# Why Not Be A Writer?

## What our students say:

"**So far, I have had eighteen novels published!** The Writers Bureau helped make this possible for me. Within six months of enrolling on my course I was having work commissioned by editors and I still work regularly for magazines."
AWARD WINNING WRITER
Christina Jones, Oxfordshire

"I thought you'd like to know that seven years since doing my course at WB I've been published in more than **150 magazines** around the world. I've now got to the stage where I'm turning down all-inclusive exotic press trips!"
Cindy-Lou Dale, Kent

"Completing The Writers Bureau course has made it possible for me to attain my life-long ambition of becoming a published writer. The level of success I have achieved has far outweighed what I was hoping for when beginning the course. By the end of this year I should have **eight books already published** and hopefully two more finished."
Michael Foley, Essex

"The amount of hours I have been able to work have been limited but I have earned approx **£3,500** from my writing this year. I now regularly sell articles and am working on a book proposal."
Jane Redfern-Jones.

"I've had **30 pieces** of work accepted by various publications since I started my Writers Bureau course – a mere 18 months ago.

"I contemplate that fact and I am amazed to have come so far in such a short time, especially when I consider the severe restrictions on the time I have available for writing. I usually manage about three hours per week, if I'm lucky."
Chris Green, Lincolnshire

"I have earned **£2,500** this past year, mainly from commissioned pieces. I am now regularly being published and am still only half way through the course."
Marie Barbieri.

**Being a writer can offer you a second income, extra spending money or even be a full-time career. It's your choice. But whatever your writing ambitions we have a course that will help you to achieve them.**

That's because our first-class home-study creative writing course contains all you need to know to become a successful, published writer. You learn how to write articles, short stories, novels, TV, radio, drama and more. You are shown how to develop your writing style, present your manuscripts, contact editors, find markets and HOW TO SELL YOUR WORK.

What's more, **you do not need any previous writing experience** to succeed on the course as it's suitable for the absolute beginner.

Throughout the course you will be tutored by a professional writer, who will offer constructive feedback on your twenty marked assignments. In addition, you can count on the support of our dedicated Student Services team who will do all they can to ensure that you get the most out of your studies.

When you enrol, your full course is sent to you on a fifteen day trial. Your studies are then flexible to your requirements as you have four years to complete your course. Moreover, **we offer you a full refund guarantee**. If you do not earn back the equivalent of your fees by the time you finish your course we will refund them in full.

**So, if you would like to learn to earn from writing, try our risk-free course.** For a free prospectus visit our website or call our freephone number today!

**www.writersbureau.com**

FREE CALL 24 ☎ HRS **0800 856 2008** Quote ref: AT1011

*Please send me FREE details of how to become a published writer:*

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Freepost RSSK-JZAC-JCJG
**The Writers Bureau Ltd**
Dept AT1011, Manchester, M3 1LE

Writers Bureau 22 Years of Success

*The Writers Bureau is accredited by The ODL Quality Council*

**Enrol online to access your course modules TODAY at www.writersbureau.com**